

EDITORIALS

# Locks and gates won't answer school concerns

It is disheartening to hear that the board of directors of the Dallas School District feels it necessary to add cameras and other security devices to schools. And it's a sad commentary on our community if there have been incidents that warrant such a response, although we haven't heard of any. Last year's mercury spill and Keystone Kops attempt to incinerate the high school weren't the kind of things the proposed measures would have prevented, nor are they common occurrences. Instead, school directors are probably trying to be "pro-active" by tightening security in anticipation of problems like ones that have happened other places and they've seen on television or read in the paper.

Some of the plans, such as having all visitors enter a building through a single door, make obvious sense, especially in the elementary schools. Many districts do this now, and some use cameras and locked doors in situations where the front door isn't visible from the office, although some have yet to feel the need to take such steps.

There have also been discussions about equipment that would help catch students smoking in the bathrooms, including an alarm that would go off in the office, whereupon an intrepid administrator would be dispatched to nab the offender. This seems like a complete waste of time and money on a job that could be more easily accomplished by having teachers monitor the halls and bathrooms. Believe it or not, there are districts where teachers still take that duty.

Last on the list are gates to be installed on the parking lot driveways, so that students can't go driving off during the school day.

Taken together, these plans present a bizarre caricature of life in the schools. The responses, which on the surface seem determined, instead are likely waste time and resources that should be spent on education, not creating an environment of fear. Perhaps we shouldn't be devoting precious time and money on high school students who haven't gotten the message that smoking is stupid and harmful, or who are so undisciplined that they go wandering off school grounds at all hours of the day. A failing grade would seem more appropriate punishment than locked gates.

The unfortunate truth is that teachers and administrators have to deal daily with problems that were rarely encountered even a generation ago. But locks, gates and alarms aren't likely to make their jobs — which all are at root to provide an adequate education — much easier, only more complicated. Instead of making our schools more like prisons, we should be demanding greater accountability from students and parents and dealing firmly with those who don't comply.

# Fresh Air fun leads to understanding

Sometimes it seems children have come to believe happiness comes in a box from Toys 'R' Us, and why not. They are bombarded with advertising messages designed to teach them if they only have the latest video game (along with the \$300 machine to play it on) or Barbie doll, their life will be complete. As anyone with children knows, that kind of satisfaction lasts about three minutes or until the toy breaks — which is often the same time period — then it's time for the next treasure.

But for city kids who get a taste of country life this summer, the best things in life really are free. Thanks to the overflowing hearts of several local families, children who spend the rest of the year playing on asphalt and ducking drug dealers can run through the fields, swim in a lake and enjoy a few carefree weeks as temporary members of their new family. And as they learn a little about life outside the city, their host family gains insight into the pressures urban kids face, and the basic good nature possessed by most young people.

## Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



If you haven't been watching the progress of the Mars Pathfinder and Sojourner rover, you're missing a real treat. The little probes are sending back startlingly clear photos of the surface of the red planet, some of which are shown in real time, or what passes for real time when you're sending images tens of millions of miles. Directed by scientists on Earth, who must choreograph the rover's moves while compensating for the 10 minutes it takes their signals to travel through space, the whole operation harks back to the early days of the space program when the world — or at least the nation — hung on every bit of news about our progress.

We need to have programs like this, even if there's no threat of nuclear war. After years in which national attention has been focused on celebrity killers and indiscrete politicians, Pathfinder and Sojourner inspire us to dream of a more exciting future. I think it's especially important that young people have heroes who use their brain power and not just their physical gifts to achieve great things. For my money, space exploration beats touchdown runs and slam dunks any day.



Reeds bending in the water in a Lehman pond. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

## A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

We are all familiar with the discussions surrounding unfunded mandates. Usually these discussions have focused on laws that the federal government passes which require state and/or local governments to do something for which the federal government gives them little or no money. Obviously, this is not a popular move, and states have successfully lobbied congress to stop this process in future legislation.

But, I have become increasingly aware of unfunded mandates within the federal government itself. It works in a similar fashion — Congress passes a law that looks great on the books; the President signs it; the appropriate agency gears up to enforce or implement the law; and then, little or no money is forthcoming to allow that agency to do its job. Sometimes money is made available for a few years and then it starts to dwindle each time the appropriations debate concludes. Sometimes the very law that is designed to provide some environmental protection includes a funding requirement that the agency must generate its own money by selling or using the very resource that it was supposed to protect.

Who is going to lobby Congress to stop these unfunded mandates? Who or what is the constituency of the US Environmental Protection Agency or the US Fish and Wildlife Service or the US Forest Service? The next time the EPA's budget is cut, will there be bears and orchids marching on Washington? The next time roads are the only thing

# Is Congress really serious about the laws of the land?

that gains funding in our national forests, will the very soil that is loosened deluge Congress with letters? No indeed. It is time that those of us who care about bears and orchids and soil insist that all environmental laws be fully funded.

As I said, I have become increasingly aware of this situation. I once thought that it was quite sufficient to write to our Congresspersons to support bills that we thought were good and to ask them not to support bills that might be bad. It is still important to do that. It is also important to make sure that bills such as the Clean Water Act or the Endangered Species Act are renewed at the end of the period designated in the original bill (generally every ten years). But, it may be even more important to make sure that long-term funding is available for the implementation of these Acts.

The Endangered Species Act illustrates this need very well. In the well-respected journal *Science* for the week of June 13, 1997, Fraser Shilling of the University of California, Davis, wrote a most disturbing article entitled "Do Habitat Conservation Plans Protect Endangered Species?" He concludes that much of the Endangered Species Act has been grossly underfunded. There is not enough money to study and list new species that might be threatened or endangered and the most recent White House budget request reduces this funding even further.

Of the 1500 species that are listed, only one third have recovery plans designed for them. Many of these recovery plans use as a target population number a smaller population than already exists! In other words, the population size can actually decline and still exhibit a "successful" recovery, thus

ensuring that no money will have to be allocated for the recovery of those species.

One aspect of the Endangered Species Act that has consistently been funded is called the habitat conservation plan or HCP. These plans are written when some economic activity will result in the incidental "take" of some threatened or endangered animals or plants. The HCPs call for the maintenance of a stable population but do not require the recovery of the population to a higher number of individuals. Therefore, they are a recipe for maintenance of the status quo. As such, they do not promote the goals of the Endangered Species Act.

My question is why should we spend money to design HCPs that benefit economic activity but do little or nothing for the plants and animals that are in danger of extinction? Dr. Shilling is right to point out these discrepancies. As the Endangered Species Act is now up for renewal, we need to demand that our Congresspersons include sufficient funds for all aspects of that Act. Otherwise, they will continue to cut funding to certain parts and fund other parts which have a vocal constituency.

This problem is certainly not restricted to the Endangered Species Act. If we are among the large majority of Americans who time after time indicate our support of strong environmental legislation in polls conducted by reputable organizations (*Time* magazine reported that 63% of those surveyed supported a strong Endangered Species Act), then we must insist that our government put its money where its laws are. Anything less is to be hypocritical and unrealistic. The bears and orchids are depending on us.

## ONLY YESTERDAY



### 60 Years Ago - July 23, 1937 STORM LEAVES EXPENSIVE DAMAGE THROUGHOUT AREA

Pent-up fury of brooding heat released itself in a terrific wind-storm which swept across Dallas last Thursday leaving thousands of dollars worth of damage in its wake. A gigantic symphony of wind, rain, thunder and lightning, the storm cut a path across town toppling at least 25 trees in its fury. On Main Street, the screaming gale lifted a full grown tree from its base and hurled it against the side of the home of Mrs. Gertrude Smythe.

The long-delayed plans of Shavertown Volunteer Fire Company for acquiring a new home reached their climax this week when the company purchased the Bush building on Main Street, Shavertown for \$5,400.

### 50 Years Ago - July 25, 1947 D.D. DURLAND BRINGS INDUSTRY TO BMT

Back Mountain Region has another new industry. D.D. Durland has purchased 75 acres from the Walter A. Pruzman property and Wilcox Estate at Chase and is erecting there a modern sand and gravel plant with a capacity of 100 tons per hour. Fifteen men are at present being employed.

Joseph MacVeigh, president, announced this week that Dallas Borough Council has a new zoning ordinance in preparation and that he will urge its adoption at the next meeting of that body. A Planning and Zoning Commission composed of at least five citizens will probably be appointed at that time to undertake a comprehensive survey of the zoning needs of the community.

### 40 Years Ago - July 26, 1957 DALLAS BANK NOW HAS DRIVE-IN WINDOW

The new addition to the Dallas Bank will provide 80% more working space. Erected by Sordoni Constuction Co., it will extend along the side of the present bank building but set back eight feet from the pavement to permit planting.

A drive-in toll telephone station, one of the first of its kind in the East, has been installed by Commonwealth Telephone Co. outside Orchard Farm Restaurant where it's available for motorists who do not have to leave their vehicles in order to make calls. According to Myron Baker, assistant general manager of the telephone is the first of its kind installed by Commonwealth and as far as he knows none have yet been installed by the Bell system.

### 30 Years Ago - July 20, 1967 LINEAR INC. BOUGHT BY COMMERCIAL CREDIT

Announcement on Friday that Linear Inc. in Fernbrook had been purchased by Commercial Credit Corp. cast a pall of despair among the workers already called back following a eight and a half month strike or lockout. Action taken places 350 employees out of a job including office personnel, union representatives and company workers. \$500,000 in vacation, pension and severance pay is forthcoming to employees.

Through joint efforts of the Diocese of Scranton and Wyoming Council of Churches migrant workers in the Back Mountain will have expanded educational and recreational opportunities this summer. Their school age children will benefit from a special program offered by the Dallas School District.

### 20 Years Ago - July 21, 1977 PEOPLE QUESTION WHO OWNS EIGHT FEET

Question of who owns an eight foot piece of land from the sidewalk on Burndale Road, at Center Hill Road to private property lines was raised at the Dallas Borough Council meeting Tuesday night. Ralph Garris, borough secretary explained that a builder's deed shows his property line is eight feet back from the sidewalk and property owners along that road do not believe they should be responsible for improving or maintaining sidewalks not on their property.

The Back Mountain Coalition, a group of community service providers, has met since February in order to identify needs of children and families in the Back Mountain Area.

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