

EDITORIALS

Phone rate plan reflects larger economic changes

The "rate restructuring" applied for by Commonwealth Telephone is another sign of a general trend in which fundamental utilities, formerly subsidized by more exotic services, are being asked to pay their own way. Whether you see this as a good or bad move probably depends on where you sit.

Low-cost basic phone service, universal delivery by the post office, airplane flights to out-of-the-way cities and other aspects of American life are falling by the wayside as a shift in perspective is taking place. We are moving from a prevailing opinion that basic services should be accessible to everyone at rock-bottom rates, to one where the market rules, unless you're at the lowest income levels. Thus, basic phone service now will cost a significant amount more, justified in part by the inclusion of enhanced services you may not want. Perhaps the biggest loser in this shift is small business, which will pay the new charges for several lines, many of which are never used for the kinds of calls the added features are suited for.

It's not much different at the post office, where big mailers get preferential rates and discounts, while small ones foot the bill for the dozens of junk-mail pieces that fill your mailbox each week, and there is talk of dropping the principle of universal service on which the U.S. Postal Service was founded.

The common thread in all these moves is that they are taking place in industries regulated by a government that leans to the "What's good for GM is good for the country" mentality.

It may be these changes are for the better. Perhaps most of us are now so well off that a few extra bucks a month won't matter, and the new features and capabilities will actually make our lives more efficient. Or it may turn out that we're entering a time when the needs of the average family or small business don't matter to politicians who lust for huge campaign contributions made necessary by an out-of-control political system. Only time will tell.



Summer poses as the season wanes. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

911 fiasco is reason enough to hang the courthouse crowd

Editor:
OUTRAGEOUS, emphasis on the second syllable. I don't know which emotion is the more dominant - anger or disgust.

The courthouse gang strikes again. They raised our county taxes 25% and also placed a \$1.25 per charge on each of our phone lines. They have been entrusted with a \$10 million 911 System as of December 22, 1995. The result especially for the Back Mountain, where we have by all reports an excellent Back Mountain Communications Center, is disillusioning. Just peruse some current headlines and statements from individuals who depend on 911. It literally affects their lives.

Towns Want To Keep Own Emergency Services
Back Mountain Residents Want to Keep Their Own 911 System
Back Mountain Resists Joining County 911 System
Row With Back Mountain Continues
Back Mountain Worried About Switch to 911.

A Dallas police officer in a letter

to the editor writes: "it is obvious that the management and the county commissioners are behind what is happening around them...Can't you hear the frustration and mistrust from the police, fire and medical personnel Luzerne County currently dispatches." Other articles state that New York City installed a \$150 million state-of-the-art 911 system, only to be embarrassed by reports of callers being put on hold for as long as eight minutes. In Los Angeles an estimated 180,000 calls went unanswered last year.

The Back Mountain leaders are engaged in a lawsuit to keep our own regional Back Mountain Communications Center. I trust their judgment. I do not have a great deal of faith in the county's version of 911. They are currently collecting fees for an Enhanced 911 System that isn't even operational throughout the county. I would rather entrust that estimated \$400,000-500,000 which could be generated from these fees with Paul, Frank, Russ, chiefs Fowler, Balavage, Miers, and all

the other members of their organization whom I know and respect.

The reaction of our leaders at the courthouse was typical. The county's old job creation machine revs into action to fatten the new bureaucracy. **Headline:** "911 Brass Ring Up King-Size Salaries" In addition to the new, expensive vehicles they are privy to, an astronomical raise is in order. How better to thumb one's nose at the public! Why listen to their concerns?

Motion presented; motion passed; on to the next item on the agenda. An agenda that interested taxpayers are not allowed to have a copy of. The county is fearful that it would eat too much money to provide a working agenda to concerned citizens. Very rarely is there any discussion on the efficacy of any item or never any dissent from any official present. This is your enhanced version of County government.

Don't worry Luzerne County residents. Our leaders are probably deeply engrossed in old Laurel and Hardy films and the Key-

stone Kops to get more ideas for this enhanced system that's just around the corner - a big corner. It should be up and running by 1998. Worry then!

Pay hikes ranging from \$3,500 to \$11,500
\$57,000 to \$61,000 Al Gervenak
\$37,850 to \$44,500 David Macekura
\$37,850 to \$44,500 Joseph Thomas
\$31,000 to \$35,000 John Skudalski
\$23,500 to \$35,000 Norbert O'Donnell

Voice Control Supervisor, a position that exists in no other county - \$35,000. Probably to go along with their unique Educational Specialist at \$24,000.

Last Headline: "Hello 911? How Long Should it Leave This Turkey in the Oven?" Let me paraphrase this: "How Long Are We Going to Keep Those Turkeys in the Courthouse?"

Let's cook 'em in November, and enjoy a real Thanksgiving.

Clarence J. Michael
Dallas

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



I know it's heresy, but I'll say it anyway: There shouldn't be a Little League World Series. Once you've picked up the paper after tossing it to the floor in disgust, I'll tell you why.

Youth sports provide one of the richest environments for adults to teach children some of the things they need to learn to be successful in life. There's team play, sportsmanship, practice, goal setting, persistence and the satisfaction to be gained from accomplishment, to name a few. All those things and more can be transmitted in the course of learning to catch a ball, make a basket or swing a club. They can also be taught over a mathematics book, while learning to play a guitar or honing skills on a chess board. One thing that's not necessary in all these activities is an emphasis on winning a world title — that can come later in life, if and when it's needed.

I played organized baseball from the age of 9 to 16, from Little League to Babe Ruth. And I was pretty good at it, even winning a scholarship to a training camp. Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed winning a whole lot more than losing, even if my teams seldom made it to the top of the standings. But 11 and 12 year olds competing for some sort of world title takes things to an unnecessary extreme. Winning isn't everything at this level of play. In fact, learning to pick yourself up from the agony of defeat may be as important as feeling the thrill of victory. Most of all, it's good to keep things in perspective, and that should emphasize learning skills and winning attitudes with the help of caring adults, not competing for a world championship under the glare of the television lights, to the exclusion of a balanced life.

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.

A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

Many people return to the places where they lived as children and barely recognize the surroundings. In fact, each time we return to Raleigh, my husband's birthplace, we practically have to get directions from his parents. The roads are now major highways. Huge buildings now stand where once were rural woods and farms. Condominiums and large houses are packed in along the banks of the creek where children used to play and go fishing. Traffic is terrible. And the neighborhood is no longer the quiet, friendly place it was in the 50's and 60's.

Knowing that similar stories are told by many of our friends, it was with some trepidation that I returned this summer to Celso, North Carolina, after an absence of more than a decade. My family no longer lives there. In fact, the house in which I grew up is now empty and somewhat dilapidated

Home: A sense of place and community

on the outside. In spite of all that, the moment I arrived in the South Toe River Valley between the Black Mountains and the Blue Ridge, I knew I was home.

During the three days we spent there, I tried to understand what made my homecoming so different from those of my husband and friends. The mountains have a great deal to do with my feelings, I am certain. I could walk out of the bed and breakfast inn where we stayed and watch the morning fog lift to reveal Mt. Mitchell, the highest point east of the Mississippi River.

The Pisgah National Forest encompasses most of the steep slopes above the valley. That has protected the area from the extreme development of ski resorts, huge shopping centers, and Christmas tree farms that have so radically changed the area near where I went to high school.

The trees in the valley actually larger and more numerous than they were 30 years ago because many hillside farms have been abandoned and forests that had been cut or burned early in this century have re-grown.

The standard of living in the valley has obviously improved greatly since I was a child. Few people live in shacks. Most have

neat homes, cars, and other conveniences. There is a new golf club, a successful Chinese restaurant in the nearest town, and other signs of progress. Therefore, lack of change cannot account for my feelings of belonging.

My sense of place is certainly related to the tall, tree-covered mountains, the sparkling brooks, and the rural character of the region. But, it is even more related to the community in which I grew up. Celso Community, Inc. is an intentional community of 30-40 family units on 1,200 acres of land which they manage cooperatively. I should have known that Celso was still a special place when we called to make reservations for three nights at the Celso Inn and they did not ask for a credit card number or a deposit. It was a bit difficult for other guests at the Inn to realize that their rooms did not need to be locked (no keys were provided) even with such valuables as laptop computers.

The Celso Inn is also a prime example of newer construction in the community - "the building harmonizes well with the mountainous beauty of the Blue Ridge", according to their brochure and our observation. There were several large houses that had been built since I had last visited but

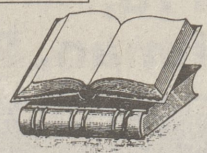
none were visible until one walked or drove practically to the front door.

Here is a community where trust, cooperation, and friendliness are still practiced on a day-to-day basis. Children and the elderly are included and contribute to the community life as they are able. One can walk along a dark road and feel safe. Cars slow as they pass pedestrians or cyclists and everyone waves as they pass.

Perhaps I returned to Celso to re-connect with the child I was when I first lived there. However, I left Celso feeling more grateful than ever that I had once been part of this truly living community. Knowing that it is still beautiful and functional gives me hope that people can shape their futures within an ecosystem without causing the widespread destruction that is prevalent in other parts of the United States.

The principles of cooperation, respect for life, caring for all kinds of people, creativity, and hard work for common causes do not have to be isolated in pockets like Celso, North Carolina. If we replace greed and selfishness with those community-building traits, our children will also be able to truly come home.

LIBRARY NEWS



The Back Mountain Memorial Library circulated 10,000 books and materials during the month of July. Adult fiction 3131, juvenile fiction 4052, adult non-fiction 1588 and juvenile fiction 1229. Reference questions answered, 410. Book Club circulation 201. Interlibrary loan transactions 31. CDs 46, audio tapes 483 and videos 249. New books added to the collection: Adult 151,

juvenile 19, books withdrawn: adult and juvenile none. New borrowers joined the library: adult 53, juvenile 77; re-registrations: adult 16, juvenile 8. Total active borrowers in the library as of July 31, 11,443.

The fall term of the children's story hours will take registrations during the week of September 2nd. Reservations for children may be made by calling the library. The 3 to 5 year olds will meet on Wednesday, beginning September 24th. Story hour sessions will be 9:30 to 10:30, 10:45 to 11:45 and 1:00 to 2:00. Toddler, 2 years old, will meet on Tuesday mornings from 11 to 11:30 beginning September

23.

New books at the library: "Serpent's Tooth" by Faye Kellerman is a heartstopper, pitting Lt. Peter Decker and his wife, Rina Lazarus, against a purely evil adversary. A lone gunman causes a terrifying mass murder.

"The Tenth Justice" by Brad Meltzer is a firecracker debut to challenge your legal thriller expectations. A Supreme Court clerk; young Washington professionals who share his house; a minor slip-up; a major thriller.

"Double Take" by July Mercer enthralls us with a supreme talent for page turning twistlers, wry humor, and a crackerjack story

where nothing is as it seems. Ariel Gold has come to Kiawah Island from L.A. to avoid shootings and tremors.

"Rising Phoenix" by Kyle Mills tells of maverick FBI agent Mark Beamon who has the thankless task of finding out who is behind the ads that have appeared in newspapers giving addicts a simple choice: "Quit or Die."

"A Firing Offense" by David Ignatius is a spellbinding novel, a genuine news thriller, a searingly realistic account of a spy suspected of working in the news room of a great American newspaper. He takes risks to find the truth.

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