

EDITORIALS

No room for wasted effort in Lake-Lehman district

Voters in the Lake-Lehman School District will see this month what kind of school board they elected last year, when the board decides whether or not to reconsider a contract for Dr. William Price, the superintendent of schools who resigned in February. Price apparently was miffed that the board wouldn't take up his contract then, but it's doubtful he quit for that reason alone. In three years, he has worked hard to build up Lake-Lehman's curriculum and make other educational improvements in a district with very limited financial resources, and the work is paying off in higher test scores and college acceptance rates. All the while he has had to fend off challenges from taxpayer zealots who seem to know the cost of everything but the value of nothing.

Lake-Lehman has had a difficult time holding on to qualified superintendents. Price followed Nancy Davis, a highly regarded woman who left after only two years to take a position at Wilkes University. While her departure was perhaps more decorous, it was no less shocking to a community that believed she had the right priorities for their schools, just as many feel about Price.

At least one member of the school board thinks Price's departure is a good thing; that someone better - and cheaper - is chomping at the bit for the opportunity to lead the district into the 21st century. Perhaps that is true, but one has to wonder if he or she will come forward given the recent history of the position.

Lake-Lehman desperately needs prudent leadership, both in the superintendent's chair and on the school board. It also needs a cooperative relationship between the two if it is to rise from the fiscal mire and continue to make academic progress. That relationship can only be built on respect, and it will take courage from both sides to step back from the abyss and begin to build the kind of trust that will be needed as the district faces looming challenges.

Perhaps Price isn't the best person for the job, but it's hard to believe anyone more qualified will want it unless the school board gets control of the runaway emotions that seem to hold sway at the moment.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



Minnesota prosecutors and judges are forcing tobacco companies to release more — and more damaging — information as they attempt to recover the cost to taxpayers of treating smoking-related diseases. The latest revelations, that company scientists knew smoking was addictive and caused cancer and other maladies decades ago, only confirms what popular folklore already suggested. I recall a high school gym coach in the early 60's calling cigarettes "cancer sticks." And remember that oldie that went "smoke, smoke, smoke until you smoke yourself to death?"

Still, it's chilling to learn the companies — and the people who worked for them — spiked nicotine when they knew the effects of their product, and actively sought ways to attract young teenagers to their brand. It worked; it appears the secret to Marlboro's success isn't a rugged cowboy but addition of ammonia to enhance the nicotine kick.

You don't have to be a teen to be stupid enough to start smoking, as I proved. I smoked in fourth grade, sneaking cigarettes where I could, trying to act like a tough guy. My downfall was a half pack of Luckies I'd stolen from my father's drawer and left in a pair of jeans that needed washing. After that experience I reformed, and nagged my dad to quit, which he eventually did, cold turkey. Certain that smoking was bad for me, I didn't touch tobacco through all of high school and a couple of years after.

Then, at age 20, I began to hang out after work with my boss, who I admired. He and his friends smoked, so I joined in and began 20 years of moderate addiction, a pack a day more or less.

Like Mark Twain, I found quitting was easy, and did it several times before the light went off in my head and I realized my primary excuse to keep smoking — "I'm under too much pressure now, I'll wait until things calm down" — was exactly backwards. If smoking is bad, it's an even worse habit when you're under stress.

I hope the latest revelations add another argument young people can use to resist smoking; that not only is it bad for health, it's a sick form of manipulation and they're the target of corporate drug pushers intoxicated by big profits.

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.

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Among the reeds and rushes. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

Don't blame taxpayer association for Price resignation

Editor:

The announcement by Dr. William Price, Superintendent of the Lake-Lehman School District, to resign Dec. 31, has nothing to do with the Taxpayers Association; nothing to do with a 5-year extension of his contract, (which, by-the-way, was never voted on); nothing to do with salary increases.

It has everything to do with Dr. Price's insistence that the vote be taken at the Feb. 10, 1998 school board meeting. Please know this: this action item was not on the work session agenda of Feb. 3, 1998, but was added to the agenda for the regular board meeting with-

out the prior knowledge of board president, Lois Kopcha.

It has everything to do with Dr. Price's refusal to allow time for the school directors to read and study the terms of this contract; copies of which have not been distributed to the board members for their perusal.

It has everything to do with Dr. Price's apparent refusal to negotiate. He insisted the contract be extended that night or he would resign and that is just what he did.

May I say that at last questions are being raised both by taxpayers and some board members.

This is a welcome change from what we have been witnessing over the years. It has been the case that the directors would vote "yes" to every administration recommendation with no apparent individual thought. It is obvious the administration cannot handle dissenting opinions.

I must agree with your editorial of Feb. 18, 1998, in one respect. The Lake-Lehman School District's budget is strained. We are operating on a \$17.4 million budget - approximately 84¢ of every dollar is spent on salaries and benefits. The district has a long-term debt of \$11,000,000.

and the buildings are in need of repair.

Although the board has a majority of so-called taxpayer-friendly directors, it is at best a weak majority. I am delighted to observe the growth of taxpayer groups state-wide. These groups are having a net effect of educating themselves and disseminating this knowledge throughout the community. I encourage all taxpayers of all districts and communities to attend as many public meetings as they possibly can. Believe me, it is extremely enlightening.

Catherine E. Pauley
Noxen

A tame encounter with the notorious Bill

the same room.

But in 1994, standing at the West Wing gate of the White House waiting for security to clear my name, the only thing I could think of was whether they would allow me to bring in my camera bag. I needed it to record for posterity my personal encounter with The Most Powerful Man on Earth.

Now everybody who enters the White House walks the long glassed hallway leading to the coat rooms in the basement. I did too, camera bag nervously in tow, ready to be pounced on by Secret Service agents afraid I'd unleash a hidden weapon when I finally met Bill. It didn't happen. I checked my coat. No one suggested that I leave the camera behind.

This was exciting. On the first floor of the White House I was free to roam from room to room, ogle the paintings and furnishings, sit on the couches and chairs, admire the loft of the sumptuous rugs, and imagine all sorts of marvelous events and situations. Oh, it was all so, so Democratic. But wait a minute now. Where was

the real object of my desire?

Asked to arrive at the White House at four o'clock it was now five. The military ensemble played great jazz pieces and the chocolate covered strawberries in the State Dining Room were wonderful (what happens when they fall on those orientals I wondered). But I wanted Bill.

As we all have heard, the President gets up around four in the morning and generally goes until late into the night, working round the clock seven days a week. "doing the business of the country." It's his job. Doesn't leave much time for romantic trysts you'd think. So when six o'clock came he was still in the excusable range, I allowed. And then in an instant he came through the door relaxed, tanned, a little harried. He shook my hand and wanted to talk about ... the responsibility of the press. No sexual innuendos, no eroticism. His personal magnetism had been reduced to some professorial level and all that remained was a very plastic political person who wanted to shake my hand.

I reacted journalistically of

course, and tried to flash his eyes out, but the flash unit malfunctioned. I did not feel his animal magnetism. He didn't heat up the room as Tina Brown, editor of *The New Yorker* recently cooed. It was surprising to me that the person I felt most comfortable with was Hillary. She was personally warm and inviting, engaging and welcoming. A very attractive, smart lady with whom I gabbed for several minutes.

It's interesting that in today's electronic age, when television lenses allow us what we think are such intimate personal glances of public personae, nothing beats meeting people face to face. As for Tina Brown, when I last remember meeting her at a northwest Connecticut home, she was fawning over (and traveling with) Harry Evans, then editor of the *Times* of London, a couple of decades her senior, and now her husband.

It must be innate to some, equating sex with power, ambition, or money. As for me if you want to be my lover, first you've got to be my friend.

WORD ON THE STREET

Q.: What will you give up for Lent?



COLLEEN FREDERICK, 6
Kunkle

"I'm going to try not to fight with my brother anymore."



TONY SITKOWSKI
Centermoreland

"No meat."



ANDREA MOLSKI
Dallas

"Basically chocolate. It's hard, I'm big on chocolate. I love peanut butter and hot fudge sundaes. I bought jelly beans instead because I thought it might be helpful."



MARLENE KONOPKE
Noxen

"I am not giving up so much as I am making an effort to get to daily mass. I want to do more spiritually."