

EDITORIALS

Colleges add dimension, variety to Back Mountain

The Back Mountain is fortunate to be home to two excellent institutions of higher learning, College Misericordia and Penn State Wilkes-Barre in Lehman. They offer close-to-home, high-quality educational opportunities for local high school graduates, of course, as you would expect. Other contributions to the local community may be less obvious, but they are significant. Here are a few:

- Both colleges have extensive libraries that are available to the public. Penn State dedicated the Nesbitt Library a few years ago, and Misericordia is constructing a new facility that should be open next year.

- Penn State's gymnasium and the Anderson Health Center at College Misericordia offer recreation for individual and team enjoyment and competition. Misericordia's is the only public-access pool in the Back Mountain.

- Each school sponsors a wide variety of cultural and entertainment events, including the just-completed Arts at Hayfield at Penn State. Also, the MacDonald Art Gallery at Misericordia displays visual art throughout the year.

- Summer camps for kids, evening classes for adults and other avenues for personal growth are abundant on both campuses.

- For stargazers, Penn State offers the Friedman Observatory for a clear view of the heavens.

Now that the academic year is in full swing, each school will provide opportunities to listen, watch, learn and break from the routine of daily life. We'll try to keep you informed of upcoming events, because exposure to them can help us all feel more fulfilled.

A day to ponder our labors

Labor Day, has become just another long weekend for most of us. More than a century after its first observance by the Knights of Labor in 1882, Labor Day is now an official holiday in the United States and Canada. But its roots lie not in the last lazy weekend of the summer but in the murderous labor unrest of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Times have changed considerably. While the spread between rich and poor has widened in recent years, the vast majority of Americans now live in a manner that would have been considered decadent two generations past. Most people have houses, vehicles and gadgets that only the wealthiest could afford in the "good old days."

But it's still true that material goods don't make us happy. There's something called the dignity of work that outlasts anything we can buy. Sure, there still are gaps between pay and productivity—nearly everyone, no matter how highly compensated—thinks they're underappreciated. The answer to that feeling lies not just in getting a raise, but in taking pride in our work, and the benefits we create for others. Unions first developed to assure that craftsmen maintained the highest standards, and members could hold their heads high.

Perhaps Labor Day should be a reminder to all of us—mechanics and teachers, draftsmen and editors—that we can draw great satisfaction from doing the best work possible, and the rewards will usually flow our way. And even if they don't, we will have the satisfaction of a job well done.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



Loud, glitzy, shallow and a lot of fun. That's how I would describe last Friday's Back Street Boys concert at Montage Mountain. Oh, and very crowded.

Having led a concert-deprived childhood (and early adulthood, too), I had never attended a live event like this one. Oh sure, I grew up in the era of Woodstock, living perhaps four hours from that sainted venue, but couldn't find the time or money to see a big-time event. There were plenty of rumors going around in 1969 about the big bash in the cow pasture, but I had to work that weekend, to feed a car habit as I recall. This is not to say I was ignorant of contemporary music; I started listening to Bob Dylan in the early 1960's and haven't stopped. I own Peter, Paul and Mary's first album. And how many of you know who Leadbelly was? I do. But I never got caught up in the music as life whirlwind, so that now I enjoy watching an occasional VH-1 biography and catching up on what I missed. Not that a Back Street Boys concert will ever be confused with Woodstock or the Monterey Pop Festival. (It was first.) It would compare better with a show you might see in Las Vegas or Atlantic City; tightly choreographed with no hint of spontaneity allowed. Why bother doing anything else, when this act draws 16,000 plus - one estimate - about 3/4 of them girls from 9 to 15, the rest their parents, one of whom told me they had driven from an hour north of Binghamton became the Boys' next event, in Syracuse, was sold out.

Am I pining for the old days, when bands came on stage hours late, if at all, and the audience showed up as much for the drugs as the show? Not really. This group, five pleasant voices backed by a capable band, put on a steady hour and a half show that made up in fun for what it lacked in musical challenge, to the delight of a primary audience for whom the concert was a sort of welcome to puberty. Given some of the hard rock alternatives, it wasn't a bad evening, or, as one of my daughter's friends remarked, "It was a great first concert."



Haying in a field in Lehman, off Huntsville/Idetown Road. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

Back Mt. Land Trust can help preserve that 'special place'

Editor:

I would like to tell you readers why my family and I asked the Back Mountain Regional Land Trust for their help. The bottom line of course was to preserve my property for my children, grandchildren and future generations.

In 1959, my husband and I purchased a beautiful property bordered by the Mehoopany Creek. Two years later, we built a log cabin using locust trees timbered from the mountain portion of our land. For 37 years, we have enjoyed the woodlands and the cool clean waters of the creek. Over the years, we came to refer to our

land as our "Special Place."

That is why, in 1996, my family and I began to look into the role that land trusts play in preserving pristine land from development and how they can protect the environment and wildlife habitat, for posterity. We found that the Back Mountain Regional Land Trust could ensure that our very "Special Place" could be protected from any future development or destruction on into the future.

Over the years, we knew that the beauty and peace of this unique property was a special gift to our family. We realized that our love of and respect for this land

was not enough. With ownership also came a responsibility to be a good steward of the land, to care for it with pride, and to protect its natural beauty in our lifetimes and beyond.

With the protection offered by the Back Mountain Regional Land Trust, ownership stays the same. I retain title to the land, as would anyone involved in this program. My family and I have written a protective conservation easement that will ensure property stewardship according to our wishes, in perpetuity. The Land Trust is the watchful third party in this arrangement.

We can be assured that the Back Mountain Regional Land Trust, as well as future third parties, will protect this property for the current owners, as well as future owners, as prescribed in our conservation easement. This assurance provides us with a wonderful feeling, knowing that from this time forward, our unique and "Special Place" in the mountains of Pennsylvania will be preserved forever.

What better gift to give to your family and the environment we are blessed with?

Mrs. Betty Davies Mehoopany

A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

Remember that old saying "It takes money to make money?" Well, it seems to me that there is a direct corollary to that in the environmental field: "It takes money to protect our environment." At least in the United States, it is much more difficult for poor people to practice conservation than it is for more affluent people to do so.

I was talking recently with one of our sons who was telling me about the experiences of a friend of his who grew up in a family that tried to live self-sufficiently. He made the strangest comment: "They had money behind them when they started." Now, just think about it for a minute. If you want to live self-sufficiently and in harmony with the earth, you must first own (or lease or rent) a fairly large parcel of land that has water, trees, good soil, and the correct exposure for solar or wind energy. Secondly, you need to acquire equipment for growing and processing food and for making clothing and other necessities. That includes canning and drying equipment, freezers, stoves, plows,

Conservation costs money

manure spreaders, etc. etc. It probably also includes a mule or horse and the wherewithal to shoe and care for that animal. The list goes on and on.

If you do happen to own the land and perhaps a saw mill to begin cutting lumber for a house, you certainly cannot begin if you are in debt. That eliminates all the members of my immediate family and, I suspect, most of you, too. My sons are caught in that strange bind of knowing the right way to live with the earth and yet having to work hard at other occupations in order to repay student loans. They have little time, energy, or money left to practice the ecology they have learned.

But, perhaps a person simply wants to live more lightly on the land without being totally self-sufficient. That is also difficult without money. Did you ever compare the price of foods in the health food store with that in the regular grocery? This morning we ate organically grown oatmeal. It sells for \$2.79 per pound, plus shipping, from a catalog. That comes to more than twice the price of the regular kind. It tasted great, but, if my husband was not required to eat oatmeal every morning, I'm quite sure we would not buy it.

If one wants to grow one's own food, that can be expensive, too. There were many years that we simply didn't have the money to order seeds after paying college tuition. And, if you do get things

planted, then you need fencing and netting to make sure that you and your family get some of the produce instead of just sharing it with the creatures of the field. And, most importantly, you need to have a yard large enough for a garden and a compost pile. Many people, especially those who rent, do not have that luxury.

Speaking of renters, I just picked up the leaflet on weatherization tips distributed by our local gas company. The first two tips have to do with repairing and replacing windows and installing storm windows and doors. Now, can you imagine going to your landlord and suggesting that these necessary repairs be done? Likely, you are paying for your own fuel and the landlord could care less about your winter heating bill. Even more unlikely would be getting the landlord to replace the furnace with a more efficient one. And, if you were to be convincing, your rent would likely go up as a result of the money the landlord spent to renovate.

We have only recently been in a position financially to replace most of our light bulbs with compact fluorescents. The savings is considerable, but it is spread over several years. That makes the initial expense of \$10-12 (\$25-30 when we started this process) seem exorbitant.

I can only conclude from all this that our country needs to reexamine the incentives (and dis-

incentives) given to private citizens who want to live conservatively. We need to encourage community gardens where fences and motion-sensitive security lights would prevent pilfering by two- and four-legged thieves. We need to reinstate the tax benefits for those (including landlords) who install energy saving devices or use alternative energy sources.

We need to make sure that regular groceries are priced in such a way that they pay for any environmental damage that results from the use of pesticides and herbicides and that all our seasonal workers receive a fair wage and decent health care. Then, the price disparity between "regular" and "organic" would virtually disappear.

And, those of us with money need to take a much more active role in promoting an ecological lifestyle. Building a huge house for two or three people to live in does not encourage conservation no matter how many energy saving devices are installed. Consider using the money instead to purchase vehicles that get good gas mileage or donate it to an environmental organization that is planting trees or promoting responsible land stewardship or cleaning up mine wastes.

I am sure that you can think of creative ways to approach this problem no matter your economic status. Let's work together to care for the earth and all its creatures.

Library news



Nancy Kozemchak

The Book Club of the library will hold the first fall meeting at the library in the community room on Monday, Sept. 21 at 1:30.

All members are urged to attend. Book discussions are welcome. The current list of book club books purchased will be announced. Guests are welcome to attend.

Book Club will hold first fall meeting

The Back Mountain Memorial Library announces the opening of the \$1.00 a bag room in the lower level of the library. This room contains shelves filled with paperback books. The room has large paper bags ready for filling in the entrance of the room. The bags may be filled with any of the paperbacks from the shelves, the customer's choice. Ruth Tetschner, chair of the book store advised the room will be open whenever the library is open.

The permanent book store is expected to open near the end of October. We are currently looking for interested volunteers to help operate the book store. We would like volunteers to work a two to four hour shift in the book store

and help with some small jobs or sorting books also. Paul Rodda and Ed Johnson have helped set up the store. The book store will be arranged according to interests, such as cooking, flowers, history, etc. There will also be a special section for children's books. Anyone interested in volunteering in the bookstore may come in and sign up. A sign up sheet will be available.

New books at the library: "The Secret Warriors" by W.E.B. Griffin is a 'Men at War' novel. The story begins in 1942. In Washington, D.C., the OSS under FDR and "Wild Bill" Donovan, escalates its tactical war, and plunges into worldwide covert operations. Everywhere, adventure crackles

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Three beautiful women are suspected of committing a series of brutal murders; with a stunning climax. The story races from London to Rome to Quebec and then to San Francisco.

"Unspeakable" by Sandra Brown is a harrowing novel of suspense. In a story that penetrates to the heart of evil, a powerful, psychotic killer returns to his hometown, where a desperate woman—deaf and alone on an isolated ranch with her young son—becomes a pawn in his game of pay-back and revenge.

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