

EDITORIALS

It's time to open up rec center planning to all

An enthusiastic group of volunteers is pressing forward with plans for a regional recreation center to serve the entire Back Mountain, and they are making progress. Whether they ultimately succeed will depend on their ability to raise funds, the patience of the owners of land designated for the center, and — perhaps most important — support from the community at large. That hasn't been a big factor so far, since the foundation of the effort has been laid without a great deal of public involvement. That is understandable; this kind of undertaking requires careful planning and fast action at the start, and too many cooks may have spoiled the broth. But now it's time to open up the process.

The first step in bringing the entire Back Mountain into the picture is taken in this issue. Dr. Gil Griffiths, the Superintendent of Schools in Dallas who also leads the group, shared a preliminary drawing of how the finished facility might look with *The Dallas Post*, and thus with you. Two land owners, who between them hold title to 130 acres that would make a wonderful recreation park, are willing to wait a while until funds can be raised to purchase their property. Raising the money will be a substantial challenge. After paying for the land, which is estimated to cost about \$750,000 plus fees, permits, surveys etc., another several million dollars will be needed to build fields and paths, parking lots and a building to house a pool, indoor courts and meeting areas.

The money will have to come from donors large and small, and the best way to attract as many supporters — and as much money — as possible is to clearly lay out the goals to the people who will foot the bill, and gain the benefit. The directors of Back Mountain Recreation Inc., the non-profit corporation that took the place of an ad hoc committee, would do well to consider scheduling public forums in locations around the Back Mountain so they can make their case directly to the people and organizations they will be asking to send checks.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



Members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors gathered last week in San Francisco to discuss the state of newspapering in the waning days of the 20th century. Among the speakers were President Bill Clinton and Andrew Grove, the chairman of the Intel Corporation, whose business drives much of the electronic world. (Isn't it interesting that the President wants to be known as "Bill," while a captain of industry uses his formal name? I'm sure pop psychology has the answer to that one.) I don't recall what Clinton had to say, but Grove joined a long line of observers to warn the editors that newspapers are on their last legs, because of the appeal of new forms of information delivery he just happens to have a big stake in.

I've been hearing the same theme with variations ever since I first set foot in a newspaper office in 1974. At that time, "audiotext" was the big threat. You don't remember audiotext? That's because, after spending millions of dollars on the technology that was going to bury print, major newspaper chains threw in the towel. In case you missed it, audiotext was a system by which you could call on a telephone to get all the news and information you wanted, by category. Somehow, dialing the phone and being forced to listen to a few minutes of commercials before finding the information they wanted just didn't get people excited. There are some survivors, but only as supplements to what can be read in the newspaper.

Then there was the fax machine. Why, when those little beasts became a fixture in every home, people would be able to get their news by fax, and only things they were interested in, too! Several newspapers started fax editions and a few may still be in existence, although I haven't heard of any lately.

Now it's the Internet, the Mother of All Competitors, that's going to be our end. Andrew Grove says he reads his morning papers in the evening, since he gets his early news from a wire service over the 'net. He's not alone in letting the paper sit until dinnertime; I suspect a very large share of morning newspaper subscribers don't really get at the paper until they get home from work, even though it's on the doorstep at dawn.

But the Internet has other problems. First, it's pretty uncomfortable to read anything longer than a news note on a computer screen. And, did you ever try to carry the computer into the bathroom with you? It really gets kind of heavy on your knees after a while.

As Mark Twain was said to note when commenting on reports of his death, the verdict against newspapers may be a bit premature.



The food is always tastier on the other side of the fence. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

Township police went beyond the call in this case

Editor:
I am writing to you concerning an incident which occurred in Dallas Township involving my property, my son, and his soccer goal.

Specifically, my son's soccer goal was removed from my front yard during Easter night. I reported the incident to the Dallas Township Police merely to make a record but suspecting that I would never see the soccer goal again.

Although the soccer goal had a

minimum value in its used condition, I was offended by the fact that it would be removed from my front yard on Easter, and moreover by recalling that my son and his friends used the goal on many occasions and, that my son had paid for the goal with his own money.

Shortly after reporting the missing goal to the Dallas Township Police, Officer Fitch appeared at my home and took a report. Much

to my great surprise, within approximately two hours Officer Fitch recovered the goal and also volunteered to return it to my property so that I would not have to travel to the Municipal Building to recover the soccer goal.

Although this may seem a trivial matter, it meant a great deal to my son and I want to compliment and publicly thank the Dallas Township Police Force and specifically Officer Fitch for his con-

cern and prompt attention to a matter which I am sure pales in comparison to many serious and difficult matters that the police must deal with on a daily basis. I have always had good experiences in contacting the Dallas Township Administration (especially Mr. Kozick and Mr. Wagner) and I can now add the Township Police to that group. Thanks again.

Garry S. Taroli
Dallas

A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

Seventy-five years ago this week (April 18, 1924) the Pennsylvania Academy of Sciences (PAS) was born. This organization has several worthy purposes:

- To encourage scientific research
- To promote interest in the teaching of science
- To stimulate exchange of ideas among those engaged in scientific work, especially in Pennsylvania, and
- To assist in the development and distribution of information about the material, educational, and other resources of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and to arrange and prepare for publication such reports as may further these objectives.

The major publication of PAS is the *Journal of the Pennsylvania Academy of Sciences* which pub-

Pennsylvania Academy of Sciences celebrates 75th year

lishes a wide variety of scholarly articles and is now in its 72nd volume. Since 1981, the organization has published 25 books. PAS also has a very active junior wing which encourages high school teachers and students to do research and report their results. Awards are given annually to many of these students. In short, PAS has consistently sought to serve the scientific community of this Commonwealth in the ways outlined in the list of purposes.

Once each year, scientists and students from universities and institutes around the state gather (as far as I know, always in April) to share their work and to socialize with their colleagues. This year's 75th anniversary celebration was held at Pocono Manor - about an hour's drive from here - April 9-11.

If you were Swedish, you would describe the occasion as a smorgasbord. One could choose to attend sessions on microbiology, geology or environmental science in the morning, and then go to hear papers on ecology and aquatic

biology in the afternoon. Or, one could choose to stand up the entire time and view poster papers by students and displays by companies who felt they had something important to share with the members.

My husband, Dr. Michael Case (a Professor at Wilkes University), and I presented a paper co-authored with two other scientists. We were hoping for some constructive feedback, but it appears that we were the only ones working on records of former climates in this region. So, after the early Saturday morning presentation, we were free to sample the smorgasbord for a day and a half.

I concentrated mainly on ecological subjects, thinking, correctly, that I would get useful grist for future columns. I learned about the feeding postures of great blue herons. I was absolutely amazed by the plant that is invading Erie County - the giant hogweed. It is a relative of Queen Anne's lace that grows 12-18 feet tall and causes terrible welts if its fluids are exposed to the sunlight after

getting on human skin. I shared my husband's enthusiasm for the work of one of his colleagues at the Marine Science Consortium who studies bottlenose dolphin populations off Wallop's Island VA. Other talks covered such subjects as the use of the Louisiana waterthrush as an indicator of the health of a stream ecosystem, the decrease in nutrient levels of soils in eastern PA, effective treatments for acid mine drainage in western PA, and the need for revision of the wetlands maps used in regulatory decision-making.

We noted that many of the participants were from state universities, both large and small. It is gratifying to see some of our educational tax dollars going to support such inquisitive young minds. The caliber of most of the presentations was excellent. I have been more disappointed at some national scientific society meetings.

Yes, PAS is an important force in the development of scientific expertise in this state. I join with many others in wishing the organization well in its next 75 years.

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Do you agree? Disagree?

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The Dallas Post

Published Weekly By Bartsen Media, Inc.
P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612
717-675-5211

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