

EDITORIALS

# Has celebrity replaced achievement in USA?

The past few days have presented a curious picture of contemporary USA to television viewers and avid readers of daily newspapers. At least it seems curious to members of the ubiquitous "baby boom" generation, whose collective memory was driven in all directions by two wildly divergent, yet strangely connected, events. First, at least on the network news, was the seemingly endless coverage of the apparent crash into the sea of a small airplane piloted by John F. Kennedy Jr. It's likely that anyone born after 1955 wonders why all the fuss over someone who is known to them only because he shared his famous father's name. That is, unless you are a member of the big-media establishment, in which case Kennedy was also the publisher of *George* magazine, a publication with a meager following outside the New York/Washington political/business axis, but which skillfully blended popular culture with politics. So, why the fuss? Probably because:

1. It's summer, and there's not a whole lot else going on.
2. The people making decisions about coverage lived through the Kennedy years, and still carry in their minds eye the image of a brave JFK Jr. saluting as his father's casket passed by.
3. Many of those same people strive to spend time on Martha's Vineyard this time of year, so they can be seen as part of the media/politics rat pack.
4. Celebrity is now the name of the game in news, and the Kennedys are the closest America has come to a royal family.

The other bit of news, which drew modest coverage by comparison, was the 30th anniversary of the first moon landing by U.S. astronauts. The anniversary is ironic because it was JFK who set us on course to the moon, when he made the brash promise in 1961 that we would put a man there before the end of the decade. He set in motion perhaps mankind's greatest scientific achievement, the spinoffs from which continue to play important roles in our everyday lives.

But times have changed; without an enemy to defend against we have consistently cut funding available to scientists, and the space program, like so much in American life, has become a vehicle of commerce, rather than discovery. Instead of the supreme excellence of a missile sending a spacecraft to a pinpoint rendezvous a quarter million miles away, we have mediocre computer programs that make billions of dollars for avaricious owners. And instead of being glued to the tube watching man's first footsteps on a barren orb, we are given hour after hour of regurgitated Kennedy family sorrow, spouted by hangers-on who are desperate for some of the glamour that clings to JFK's heirs more than three decades since the 35th President was assassinated. In doing so, they display none of the grace, wit and charm JFK Jr. managed to develop while growing up in the fishbowl of a public life.

We would be better served if the news coverage could be reversed, and Americans could relive the triumph of the moon landing while the Kennedy family could mourn its loss in private. But that seems as wistful a dream as did landing on the moon when it was first broached 38 years ago.

## Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



You may have heard that our fine representatives in Congress are debating a "Patients' Bill of Rights" as it has been called, to offer protection against abuses by health care organizations. (Read, insurance companies.) Now, I doubt that 200 years from now they'll be holding celebrations on the anniversary of this momentous occasion, but maybe something useful can be done. (Wouldn't that be different, Congress doing something useful, and in the summer too?)

As I understand it, the Democrats want to give anyone whose HMO denies them an appointment with a faith healer the "right" to sue the bejeesus off their HMO. The Republicans, on the other hand, want anyone with a complaint against an HMO to submit to binding arbitration, before a review board made up of bean counters who regard loss of a limb as a minor inconvenience. This might require renaming the bill to something like the "Insurers' Protection Act."

By the way, for those of you who haven't kept up with the acronyms, HMO stands for Health Maintenance Organization. I guess that means they don't plan to make you feel better, but you probably won't get any worse.

As is the wont in Washington, a compromise will surely be reached that will have as little effect as possible on those unable to send bushels of money to their Congressperson, and it will be worded in such a way that we'll thank our lucky stars such compassionate individuals are watching out for us. If you think this is sarcasm, think again. Remember the President's recent touting of a prescription drug plan for Medicare recipients? Turns out the average savings would be a measly couple of hundred bucks a year, while the beneficiaries of his proposed largesse would still be shelling out hundreds each year before they saw any savings. Big whoop.

Just so you know, our family patronizes an HMO and we're quite happy with the quality and service . . . so far. But it seems to me that if my doctor has to march to corporate orders, I ought to be able to hold his employer accountable should necessary care be denied. Or, maybe I should be able to sue Congress for malpractice.



### The Boys of Summer

Robbie Justice, foreground, Ronnie Shiner, seated, and Carl Bartizek, top, relaxed at their tree fort, which they constructed this summer. The photographer was sworn to secrecy about the exact location. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

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Back Mountain Memorial Library Association announces its 1999 Ham and Yegg list of contributors for the seed money to buy antiques for its recent auction:

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Mundy's district encompasses: Dallas Borough, Dallas Township except for the north voting district, and Kingston Township.

## ONLY YESTERDAY



### 70 Years Ago - July 20, 1929 LARKSVILLE MAN DIES ON AMUSEMENT PARK RIDE

Doing stunts on the Wild Cat roller coaster at Fernbrook Park, resulted in the death of a 40 year old man from Larksville, Thursday when he was thrown from a speeding car at the top of the second slope and dragged to the bottom of the steep incline. Witnesses say that upon entering the roller coaster he stood up several times and was repeatedly pulled to his seat by friends. He insisted on standing. However, at the top of the second was standing when the car lurched and he was thrown over backward, his foot catching in the car. He was dead on arrival at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital.

### 60 Years Ago - July 2, 1939 GREENWOOD KIWANIS MEET WITH GOVERNOR JAMES

Governor Arthur H. James has invited representatives of Mount Greenwood Kiwanis Club and Greater Dallas Rotary Club to confer with him at his Harveys Lake summer home to discuss the possibility of constructing a new highway between Trucksville and Dallas along the abandoned right-of-way of Wilkes-Barre Railway Corp. Encouraged by the Governor's interest, a joint committee from the two service clubs is planning to meet with him as soon as enough data to justify discussion has been compiled.

### 50 Years Ago - July 22, 1949 DALLAS BUSINESS SOLD

Eugene W. Sick, Wilkes-Barre has purchased Dallas 5c, 10c to \$1 Store from Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Paul. The transaction was completed last week and Sick took possession on Thursday. The Dallas store was established 19 years ago, from a small beginning the store had a healthy growth and in 1940 it was completely remodeled and enlarged to give Dallas its first modern store on Main Street.

### 40 Years Ago - July 24, 1969 MISERICORDIA CONVERTS HOMES FOR DORMITORIES

College Misericordia in need of dormitory space for rapidly increasing enrollment has taken a first step to ameliorate crowded conditions by purchase of the former Titman home at 166 Lake Street, now occupied by the Robert Schlaak family. It will be arranged to house 10 girls and two sisters. Another home on Lake Street will also be purchased within a short time, one with an equal capacity.

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Eipper, Rice St., Dallas, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary with an open house July 22. There are three living children and five grandchildren.

### 30 Years Ago - July 24, 1969 HL SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANS UNRESOLVED

A representative from Glace & Glace, Harrisburg, the firm which has done a feasibility study for sewage disposal at Harveys Lake reported last week that he had not received confirmation from DAMA for the possibility of hooking into their proposed system. Bid casts are higher than anticipated and it appears now that it will be more than \$76,800. He said he was of the opinion that it would be \$20,000 to \$25,000 cheaper to treat your own. I have done all I could with the Dallas Authority and I do not believe they are interested.

You could get - Whole hams, 49¢ lb.; Cornish roasters, 49¢ lb.; peaches, 4 lbs. 49¢; tomatoes, cello carton 23¢; Bounty paper towels, jumbo roll, 19¢; Welsh grape jelly, 1 lb. 4 oz. jar, 39¢.

### 20 Years Ago - July 19, 1979 PENNAPRINT HELPING NICARAGUAN NEWSPAPER

"La Prensa" a Monagua, Nicaragua newspaper destroyed recently by National Guardsmen of now deposed president Anastasio Somoza will be assisted back into publication by a group of small Pennsylvania newspapers. Pennaprint Inc. publisher of seven weekly newspapers announced that it is donating a computerized photo-typesetting unit through an Inter American Press Association effort to get La Prensa back into publication.

## The Dallas Post

Published Weekly By Bartsen Media, Inc.  
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717-675-5211

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