

EDITORIALS

Building codes are a burden worth bearing

Decades after other states adopted minimum construction standards for homes and offices, Pennsylvania has joined them. The new statute, if it is properly enforced, will assure home owners that their dwelling is built with safety and security, as well as style.

This would seem to make sense; it's not reasonable to expect home buyers to have either the skills or the time to ride herd on subcontractors who they may not even know are working on their home. And, while the vast majority of builders are conscientious, there are always a few bad apples in the basket who won't be exposed unless someone knowledgeable catches them in the act of cutting corners.


One complaint about the law that has some merit is that someone will have to pay for inspections that are part and parcel with regulations. The state has bent over backward to ease the burden, allowing small towns to pool resources or to contract with nearby communities that have building inspectors on staff. Still, there will no doubt be added expense to the towns, which will most likely be passed on in the form of higher building permit fees. And the cost of construction may rise a bit if it turns out homes haven't been built to meet these basic codes, but a little extra to insure the integrity of construction seems like a solid investment in the long run.

Beyond towns' and homeowners' concerns, uniform building codes should mean fewer risks for firefighters, police and medical personnel, who now are called to emergencies that are caused by substandard construction, and made more dangerous because of it.

There are still voices raised against the codes, contending they are an unnecessary burden and expense on towns and homeowners, and will stunt growth. Judging by Back Mountain communities, that is a hollow complaint, since the only place that has both codes and a full-time inspector — Kingston Township — has seen steady development for many years. All in all, assuring that homes are built to accepted standards seems more sensible than leaving everyone at the mercy of contractors' consciences.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



Like father, like son. That seems to be the case with the Bush family, as George W., better known as "W," showed recently. You probably recall that during the 1992 presidential campaign, incumbent George H. W. Bush pooh-poohed Bill Clinton's criticism of the slow economy. While Bush defended the nation's performance, Slick Willie's camp adopted the slogan "It's the economy, stupid," and hammered away at whatever weaknesses they could ferret out.

Now, Dubya says he doesn't believe figures that rank Texas as second worst for hunger among the 50 states, and nearly the same for "food insecurity," translated as the share of people who worry about having enough food. Given the chance to "feel the pain" of those who don't have enough food, he chose instead to question the accuracy of the survey, which of course makes him look as if he doesn't care about folks who can't even manage to keep food on the table.

I think I know the root of the Bushes' problem, and there's very little they can do about it, since it's been inherited, along with millions of dollars. You see, W has never been hungry and doesn't know anyone who is, just as his dad didn't have any acquaintances who were doing poorly in the early 1990's economy. Despite their best efforts to portray themselves as self-made men, neither can escape a privileged background that denied them the opportunity to see firsthand how most of us live. The result is they relate to most Americans only in theory, not practice, and it's hard to compare a grumbling tummy with a shortage of caviar.

W's father tried to bridge the gap with beer and pork rinds, but no one believed he preferred them to brie and chardonnay. Dubya may have to try a new tactic, especially since no one today wants to admit they're really not rich, even if they're just a step ahead of foreclosure. Maybe he could try wearing Dockers pants and Old Navy fleece, the uniform of the middle class, and paying for them with a credit card that's charging 22 percent interest. It might do him a world of good.




Your news is welcome

The Dallas Post welcomes submissions about Back Mountain people and events. In order to plan each issue, we must adhere to self-imposed deadlines, as well as those of our printer. To have the greatest likelihood of publication, items should be received at our office by 4 p.m. the Friday prior to each issue. Items will be accepted until 4 p.m. Mondays, although much of the paper is already assembled by that time. Send or bring items to: The Dallas Post, 607 Main Road, P.O. Box 366, Dallas, PA 18612. Our normal business hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. A deposit box is located at the front of the building for after-hours submissions.

The Dallas Post

Published Weekly By Bartsen Media, Inc.
P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612
570-675-5211

Ronald A. Bartizek PUBLISHER	Charlotte E. Bartizek ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER OFFICE MANAGER
Gregory Culver ADVERTISING ACCT. EXEC	Kasia McDonough REPORTER
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Happy New Year!

2000

From
The Dallas Post

Guest column



Jerry Shilan

From his earliest beginnings, man has had an obsession with time. There is evidence he lined up stones and carved marks into bones to help him keep track of its passage.

Eventually systems were developed to track the seasons and to determine the appropriate date to hold religious rituals. The phases of the moon and the "journey" of the sun were the guideposts to which ancient priests and shaman hitched their pronouncements. With the advent of agriculture, more precise calculations were needed. Keen observation of the heavenly bodies enabled many men from different civilizations to create what we today call calendars — a device for fixing the beginning, length and division of year — and for arranging days and longer divisions of time such as weeks, and months into a definite order. The first of these devices came into being more than 4,000 years ago, but the word calendar we get from the Latin "calendarium" — meaning a moneylender's account book. The idea of clearing the books and paying off one's debt before beginning a new year is still deemed honorable in China.

It is interesting to note the universal habits of man. There appears to be more that unites us as human beings, than that which divides us. The world has become internationalized, and even those who cling to old calendars, based on religious beliefs, have adopted the standardized Western solar-oriented calendar called the Gregorian Calendar. It was the Roman Catholic Pope Gregory XIII who, with the help of an astronomer named Christopher Clavius,

Calendars mark more than time

introduced the presently accepted civil calendar on Friday, October 15, 1582.

It quickly replaced the Julian calendar, which had been in use since the days of Julius Caesar. It was immediately adopted by the Roman Catholic countries throughout the world. Japan, China, Egypt and most of the other Western countries soon found it expedient, but England and its American colonies refused to adopt the Gregorian Calendar until 1752. George Washington, who was born on February 11, 1731, (Julian Calendar) aged 11 days, overnight when the new style calendar went into effect. Today we celebrate his birthday on February 22 — or President's Day. There had been an 11-day discrepancy from the old to the new.

In just a few days (on January 1 — because that is when Roman consuls used to take office) we will begin using a calendar marking the year 2000. You can throw away, or keep for posterity, the last calendar of this century prefixed with "19." Although there is one more year left in the 20th Century, from now on you must remember to write "2000" and hope that your computer does likewise.

But why 1999 and 2000? Other people have been marking time and keeping calendars longer than we have. The Hebrew calendar begins at the Creation, having occurred 5,760 years ago. The Chinese will be celebrating the year of the dragon, 4698. More than 1.2 billion people will be saying "Ganged Hoy Fat Choy!" to one another on the second full moon after the winter solstice (February 5).

Buddhist countries count the years since the year the Buddha became enlightened. The people of Thailand are approaching the year 2574. The Muslims start their calendar on what we would term July 16, 622 — the date Muhammad fled from Mecca to Medina. The Islamic year is only

354 days long, so the months move backward through all the seasons.

Over the centuries literally hundreds of calendars have been created by the likes of the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the people of Indian and Africa. The aborigines of Australia, the Mayans, Incas, Aztecs and even the less civilized tribes of the Americas had sophisticated methods of keeping track of time. All of these systems had their time and place in the scope of human history — and they all worked well in a localized fashion.

In the complex, modern, international world in which we presently live, it is apparent that in order to make airlines run on time, or keep financial markets and Internet connections functioning; we must all be on the same page of the same calendar. And that calendar, the most widely used today, is referred to by some as the Christian Calendar because, in AD 520, a monk named Dionysius Exiguus, suggested that the years be counted from the birth of Christ (thus giving us *AD anno Domini* "the year of the Lord," or BC, "before Christ"). Some who prefer to keep the calendar secular use the term CE (Common Era). A case can be made that our calendar is an international amalgamation of ideas and names. We have months named for Roman gods and emperors, and days of the week named for pagan Teutonic deities. The Jews borrowed the concept of a seven-day week from the Babylonians and the idea was adopted by all of Christendom.

There are those who would mess with the currently accepted calendar. Some would have a "Universal Calendar" or a "Perpetual Calendar" — or even a "Fixed Calendar" with 13 equal months of 28 days. But don't worry, it won't happen in our life time. There is too much cultural resistance. We human beings don't like to change too many things to

fast. The dawning of a new millennium is about all most of us can cope with at the moment. Prepare yourself! It is just 365 days away. That's right the new 21st Century does not begin until January 1, 2001. Regardless of what the president says, you're stuck in the 20th Century for one more year.

I suspect that man's preoccupation with calendars and clocks has something to do with his desire to conquer and control time. For me it has always been a futile effort. I never seem to have enough of that precious commodity. Naturalist John Burroughs once said: "I still find each day too short for all the thoughts I want to think, all the walks I want to take and all the books I want to read. But the longer I live the more my mind dwells upon the beauty and the wonder of the world."

I wish I could give you the gift of time, and tell you it was a full measure that would last for eternity. Unfortunately no amount of money can buy time or years, even though modern medicine appears to have found ways to prolong our days on this planet. At the moment of your birth you were given an indeterminate number of hours, days and years. How you choose to use them is up to you. We hope our simple gift will remind you to use time wisely and well, and each day, when you glance at a calendar you will also remember that we wish for you — another day of health and happiness — and another year of life and prosperity.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
Jerry Shilan grew up in Lehman, and graduated from Lake-Lehman High School. He moved to California after serving in the U.S. Navy Reserve and attending Wilkes College (now University), where he worked for the Hollywood Citizen-News newspaper, spent several years with Gene Autry's radio and television operations and eventually formed his own public relations agency. He moved back to Outlet Rd. in Lehman in 1997.

ONLY YESTERDAY



70 Years Ago - Dec. 28, 1929
ROTARY DONATIONS HELP TO BRIGHTEN HOLIDAYS

Dallas Rotary Club presented 17 Christmas baskets to the needy families of Dallas, Shavertown, Trucksville, Harveys Lake and Noxen. Each year at Christmas time, Rotary endeavors to maintain some community or club service, and this year following its procedure of the previous year,

Now playing at Himmler Theatre, "The Girl in the Glass Cage" with Carol Nye.

60 Years Ago - Dec. 29, 1939
ICE SKATERS BELIEVED TO HAVE STARTED HL BLAZE

A fire, believed to have been started by skaters who broke into the building to warm themselves, destroyed the summer home of Richard Horton, Nanticoke, on Wednesday afternoon and damaged neighboring cottages. Together, the firemen saved the cottage of Carter Bache, Nanticoke merchant, and Stanley Bozinski, Nanticoke.

You could get - Turkeys for 25¢/lb; chickens for 19¢/lb; Heinz ketchup 17¢ for a large bottle; Ritz crackers 1lb package, 20¢.

50 Years Ago - Dec. 30, 1949
RICHARDSON TO INTRODUCE NEW CARS

The new Dodge cars which will be introduced Jan. 4, will have a fresh styling appeal, new low body lines, and many refinements in

design, according to L.L. Richardson who has returned from a dealer preview in New York. Mr. Richardson cordially invites everybody to his gala open house, Jan. 4 through 7.

40 Years Ago - Dec. 30, 1959
KT PURCHASES NEW POLICE CRUISER, DUMP TRUCK

Kingston Township Officials accepted delivery of two new 1960 pieces of equipment that will add to the efficiency of the Police and Street departments. Harold C. Lewis of Luzerne Motors, handed over the keys to a new Ford police cruiser and Ford dump truck.

Kingston Township supervisors have invited the public to an open house to be held Sunday afternoon from 2 until 5 in the new Kingston Township Building. The supervisors will hold their first meeting of 1960 on Monday night.

30 Years Ago - Dec. 30, 1969
RESCUE CREWS BATTLE BLIZZARD CONDITIONS

Dallas ambulance and two township trucks combined in a mercy mission during Friday's driving snow storm to rush an ailing man to General Hospital. Ambulance attendants had to walk from their homes to the fire hall because of the depth of the drifts, while township road crew mounted a snow removal project at the home of Fred Hughey, Fernbrook. The team found even main roads barely passable, due to drifted snow.

20 Years Ago - Dec. 26, 1979
HL WOMEN'S CLUB REACHES OUT TO LESS FORTUNATE

Harveys Lake Women's Service Club members delivered "baskets of cheer" to 225 needy elderly persons in the Harveys Lake area.