

EDITORIALS

Relax, enjoy Labor Day, and remember how it was

Few of us are familiar with a time when Labor Day meant more than the last cookout or swim party of the summer. We've been fortunate to live in a time of unprecedented financial prosperity and tolerant, if not cordial, relations between management and labor. For the most part. Yes, many people still can't find lucrative work and strikes and other confrontations still occur, but the scale of both shortcomings of our system is a fraction of what it was only a few decades ago.

Yes, a few decades ago. One side effect of our good fortune is an uncanny loss of memory of a past that is relatively recent. Workers struggled in unhealthy, dangerous working conditions for hundreds of years until the successful labor movements of the 1920's and 1930's. Progress since then has been remarkably rapid, and now we think we're falling behind if our incomes don't double every few years.

We shouldn't take for granted the progress we have made as a society since the days when workers were routinely used, abused and replaced and strikers were gunned down while fighting for rights we couldn't imagine being without. There's more to be done, and now is the time to take the next steps in providing a reasonable level of security for every American. But first, we can relax, toss an extra hot dog on the grill and thank our lucky stars that the first year of our new century is so far removed from the last one.

Safe driving tips for school days

With students in local schools back in the classroom, it's a good time to remind people about using caution near those big yellow buses and to watch out for children who may or may not be paying attention to the 3,000 pounds of metal you're driving.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) issued some good safety advice for everyone on the road. Yes, much of it is common sense but reminders in the name of safety never hurt anyone.

Tape this to the refrigerator and read it before you head out the door, book bags and lunch boxes in hand:

- Slow down and be especially careful of school zones.
- Be on the look-out when exiting driveways for children walking to bus stops or to school
- Yellow or red flashing lights on a bus mean it's going to stop, so be prepared
- Yellow flashing lights are a signal for drivers to slow down, while red flashing lights mean the bus is stopping to pick up or drop off children. Drivers should come to a stop at least 10 feet away from the bus, and don't move until the lights stop flashing and all children have crossed the street safely.
- Parents can make sure children arrive at the bus stop five minutes early so they don't run to the bus.
- Teach your kids about the danger zones - the front, sides and rear of the bus. These are the areas where bus drivers may not be able to see them. And never walk behind the bus!

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



Ah, you can almost smell fall in the air, the season of crisp mornings, clear skies, football and . . . the top of my list of inventions that aren't just useless, they're stupid and dangerous. I'm talking, of course, about the leaf blower, those contraptions that break the peace of quiet fall mornings with the unholy whine of tiny internal combustion engines as they fill the air with dust. But boy, don't we love 'em!

My arguments against these infernal gadgets are many. First, of course, is the piercing cry of their model airplane engines as users make pass after pass across lawns and parking lots in a futile effort to corral leaves and other detritus into neat piles. That's the best-case; more often the blowers simply send the offending matter into flight and after a short time it lands in another part of the lot, or of the town. That brings up the second mortal fault; rather than cleaning up leaves and dirt, blower operators mostly redistribute them, and along the way the dust and particles end up in our lungs or on our just-washed cars. And that's not to mention the air pollution from the overworked engines. Finally, there's the whole principle of using a powered device to do less efficiently what can be done by hand. I've watched people use these things, and it takes them twice as long to clean up an area, and they pick up half as much junk because the other half ends up all over the neighborhood.

I guess the popularity of leaf blowers is just one more testament to the American love for anything motorized. Why else would otherwise sane and environmentally-conscious people strap on these gadgets, fire them up and proceed to add to air and noise pollution before jumping in their SUV to head for a stock car race?

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Cute cukes. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

What's on the Horizon?



Marshall Rumbaugh

This is a monthly column written by members of the North Branch Land Trust, which is headquartered in Trucksville.

Pennsylvania's forests were once home to many large animals that have now disappeared, like the panther, elk and wolf. Most people would be surprised to learn that our state was also inhabited by large herds of buffalo. As late as 1773, one herd along the west branch of the Susquehanna River was estimated to have 12,000 animals.

Wintering as far south as Georgia, the bison made their way to Pennsylvania as the weather warmed, attracted to the wild grasses which grew along rivers and streams. They migrated in an orderly fashion, often going in single file along the Susquehanna River. Their pounding hooves sometimes compacted the river trails to a depth of two feet. (Picture hundreds of bison making their way into the Back Mountain, plodding along Toby's Creek where now a busy highway lies).

As European settlers poured into America, however, the buffalo migration was disrupted.

How PA lost its last buffalo

Many settlers were people of humble origin whose forefathers were not allowed to carry guns or hunt in the game preserves of the gentry in the old country. The buffalo migrations became an occasion of abandonment when the settlers would wait at the passes overlooking the trails and slaughter the animals as they went by.

One can only speculate as to the fate of the last member of any species now gone from the land. Was the last wolf shot by a farmer protecting his livestock? Did the last panther die of starvation in a lonely den covered with snow? Was the last elk run to ground by a hunter's pack of dogs? But the fate of the last buffalo in Pennsylvania is known and the story is stranger than fiction.

By the summer of 1799, there was only one small herd of buffalo left in Pennsylvania, numbering about 400. Unable to migrate south, the animals faced starvation in the bleak, snowcovered mountains.

One winter's day, led by a giant black bull whom the settlers named "Old Logan," the herd came down from the mountains and onto land cleared by a man named Samuel McClellan, who killed several buffalo as they passed his

cabin. The starving animals fled into the barnyard of Martin Bergstresser where his sheep and cattle were grazing around a large haystack.

Led by Old Logan, the buffaloes broke down a fence and crushed the helpless domestic animals in their path. Aided by Sam McClellan and his 18-year-old daughter Katie, Bergstresser killed four of the buffalo. Panicked by the killing and the attacks of the settler's dogs, the starving bison fled the barnyard leaving behind a scene of destruction. Although the barn was still standing the spring house and haystack were gone; six cows, four calves and 35 sheep lay dead.

Feeling good about having driven off the destructive herd, Sam McClellan headed for home. His good mood was short-lived, for as he came in sight of his clearing, he saw the buffalo circling his small cabin. Thinking only of his family, McClellan fought his way through the herd to his cabin door where he confronted Old Logan. He fired and wounded the old bull who then crashed through the cabin door. Others from the herd followed their leader and crowded into the cabin. McClellan tried to stop them, slashing with his bear knife. But unable to enter the cabin, he ran to Bergstresser's for help. When they returned, the only sound coming from the house was the hideous snorting and bumping of the buffaloes within. Finally after tearing down one of the cabin

walls, they killed Old Logan and were at last able to drive the herd away. In what was left of the cabin, not a stick of furniture remained. The bodies of McClellan's wife and three children had been crushed and trampled deep in the mud of the earthen floor.

As word of the tragedy spread, it was decided that the buffalo should be hunted down. A posse of 50 hunters was formed. After several days tracking, the herd was found, starving and trapped in crusted snowdrifts west of Lewisburg. The hunters took quick advantage and moved in among the buffalo, shooting and stabbing and bludgeoning the helpless animals to death until the snow was red with their blood. Motivated more by revenge, the men took no meat or hides. The slaughter continued until not a living bison remained. Then the men climbed to the top of the mountain and built a bonfire to celebrate the destruction of the last herd of buffalo in Pennsylvania.

Note from Marshall Rumbaugh: Marion Schock was the author of the original story, written prior to 1936. It first appeared in a newspaper article, which is where Theodore Long discovered it and included it in his *Tales of the Cocolamus*, copyright 1936.

Marshall Rumbaugh is a local artist, and a lifelong resident of the Back Mountain and a member and volunteer of the Land Trust.



70 Years Ago - Aug. 29, 1930

LOCAL BOYS COMPETE

Fred Winters, Kenneth Rice and Wilbur Searfoss of Lehman High School, and Grover Anderson of Laketon High School represented Luzerne County in a dairy cattle judging contest that was held in conjunction with the Future Farmers Convention at State College. There were seventy teams entered in the contest, and prizes were awarded to the ten best teams. This was the first time the boys had entered the contest, and they placed ninth overall.

The 25th annual reunion of the Warden family took place in Dallas at the home of Howard Warden. Games were played all afternoon, followed by dinner in the evening. Now playing at Himmler The-

atre, "Young Eagles" with "Buddy" Rogers.

60 Years Ago - Aug. 30, 1940
COLD WAVE HITS AREA

In sharp contrast to the sizzling heat earlier in the month, a cold wave paid a visit to the area and caused local farmers to worry. On one morning ice was found in a pan of water in Shavertown, and on another day, a thin layer of ice covered the highway during a rain shower. Delicate flowers and plants were hit hard before the weather became seasonable again.

50 Years Ago - Sept. 1, 1950
PRINCE OF PEACE FESTIVAL

500 people attended the opening night of the Prince of Peace Festival, sponsored by the Men's Club. The Goddard brothers had a concession stand with hot buttered homegrown corn, hot dogs, hamburgers, pizza and beverages. Tommy Andrews served rabbitburgers. The bell recently removed from Goss School and soon to be hung in the bell tower

of the church, was displayed on the festival grounds with a chest beneath it to hold donations for the building fund. Each donor was allowed one pull at the bell rope and one tap of the bell.

40 Years Ago - Sept. 1, 1960
FIRE CAUSES DAMAGE

Fire of undetermined origin caused \$10,000 worth of damage to a home in Dallas Township. The entire second floor was gutted and the first floor was damaged by smoke and water. The owners lost all of their clothing and many of their personal possessions which were in dressers and closets on the second floor. Firemen fought the blaze for more than 3 hours. More than 150 people gathered quickly, among them a Girl Scout troop, and rendered every assistance, carefully removing furniture and storing it in a nearby barn before it could be damaged by smoke or water.

30 Years Ago - Sept. 3, 1970
TREE FALLS ACROSS ROAD

A gigantic poplar tree fell across

Holly Street in Trucksville, on Monday morning. The 60 foot tree apparently had been hit by lightning during the previous nights storm and gusting winds caused the weakened tree to fall the next morning. The owner stated that she had heard a loud crack during the storm at approximately 2:30 a.m., but after investigating, she could see no sign of damage. She surmised that the lightning had struck the tree at that time.

20 Years Ago - Aug. 28, 1980
PA TRACTOR PULL RETURNS

The Pennsylvania Tractor Pullers Association returned to the Lehman show grounds on Labor Day for the areas last pull of the season. Fans got another treat as the super stocks and modifieds returned along with the mighty modified mini-tractors. Also included were three classes for strictly stock tractors, just as they came from the factory. The Tri-County Tractor Pullers and the Lehman Volunteer Fire Co. sponsored the event. A total of \$5,000 in cash prizes was awarded.

Q: Where do you find the most Back Mountain news, week after week?

A: Only in The Dallas Post, the Back Mountain's newspaper since 1889.