

EDITORIALS

Christmas reminds us of the power of humility

"And so this is Christmas," goes the John Lennon lyric. "Let's hope it's a good one, without any fear." That wish is reality for most Americans this year, with the number of our soldiers in harm's way at historic low levels. At home, more of us are working than ever before, and violent crime has decreased at dramatic rates. While we are far from wiping out poverty, or putting an end to domestic violence, overall we surely are the most secure and most affluent society in the history of mankind. Is that enough?

Two thousand years ago, a child was born who brought joy and hope to the shepherds in the fields and to poor people in ancient villages. His birth was so momentous that many of the richest and most powerful men of the day sent emissaries bearing gifts to show their respect and obeisance. One must wonder what the reaction would be today, in a world where humility seems a more precious commodity than was gold in those ancient days. Could such an event push mega mergers and overpaid sports figures off our front pages, or would it be treated as an oddity that anyone could be so excited about a poor child born in a makeshift nursery?

Christmas is not a universal holiday, of course, since it is the linchpin of just one of the world's major religions. But the message of a humble child who is really the king of kings has enormous appeal and meaning, particularly at a time when too many of us — the most fortunate people ever to walk the Earth — are consumed by the drive to acquire money and goods as a means of fulfillment. No matter what your faith, keeping the Christmas spirit in your holidays this year will make them more about our fellow man, and less about things.

The 'Banded Beast' will make waste useful again

Compost may not be the most glamorous of materials, but it serves a very useful purpose. Thanks to the folks at the Dallas Area Municipal Authority (DAMA) and a generous state grant, Back Mountain gardeners will have ready access to as much as they need to better make their gardens grow. DAMA has put into service the "Banded Beast," a large machine that will convert organic waste into a soil-enriching mixture formed from last month's grass clippings and raked leaves.

Aside from being a source of free compost, the Beast will remove about 450 tons of organic matter from landfills, leaving more room for waste that belongs in them, while reducing gases and other residue. Altogether, it's a clear victory for local towns and for the environment — a good deal all around.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



I'm so gratified that my many fans called, frantically worried that I might not be writing a column any longer. My thanks to both of you; your loyalty is an inspiration. Truth be told, though, I have been thinking about taking a break, since subject matter just seems to be harder to come by with each passing week. For example, in the past I've written about the outrageous salaries being paid to overgrown boys who play games with sticks and balls. But my rants have apparently had little effect, judging by the package Alex Rodriguez just got from the Texas Rangers. Seems Golden-Rod, as his friends call him behind his back, will be making about \$170,000 each game for the next 10 years, or in all about enough to buy Seattle, who's team lost out on the bidding for his services. And I thought Shaq was overpaid for a guy who couldn't win a third-grade foul shooting contest.

As for politics, long a staple of know-it-all pundits, what's left to write? The 2000 Election Epic cost more, took longer, and finished less satisfactorily than any campaign in a century. And that was before the Supreme Court joined the circus by first halting recounts, then after a few days ruled there wasn't enough time to recount. I know a banana republic when I see one, so I wouldn't dare criticize that bunch or I'll end up as one of the disappeared.

Even my children are becoming a less useful source of column ideas. I wrote a few weeks ago about their growing appetite for expensive toys and clothing, only to be brought up short when Katie said she really didn't want that much for Christmas, since she has most everything she needs. What a great kid.

Fear not, though. The holidays are here, and should present a bagful of column ideas, especially if fueled by ample amounts of food and drink.

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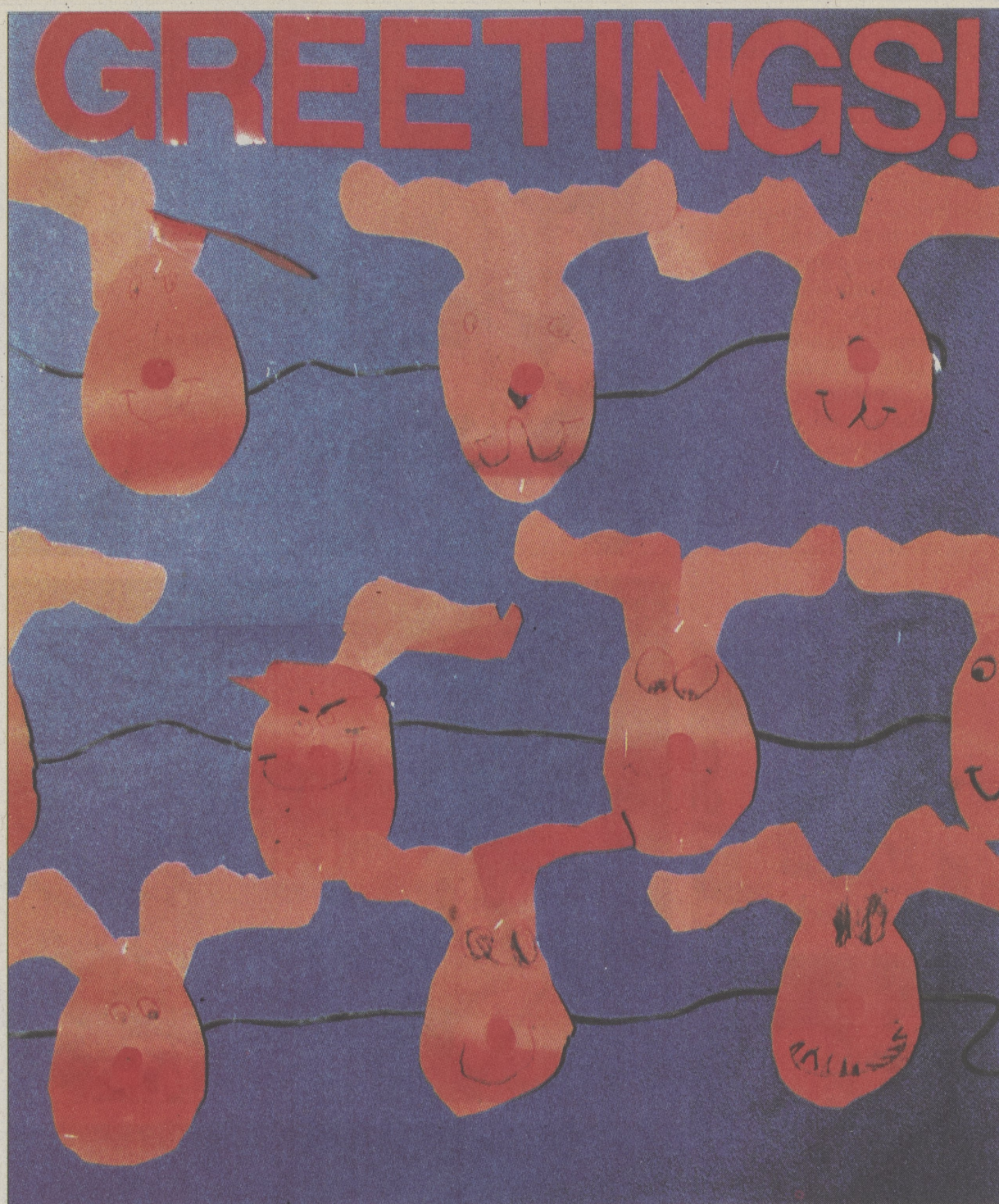
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Season's greetings on the wall at Lake-Noxen School. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

What's on the Horizon?



Rick Koval

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

October 13, 2000 - My son, Alex, and I meet an old friend for lunch in Seattle. I have just arrived after a smooth non-stop flight from Philly. Soon, we are on a bus from a "Park 'n Ride" to the stadium where we enjoy the third game of the Mariner/Yankee play-off series. Trains passing in the twilight add much to the ambience.

Oct. 14 - Alex and I attended a one-day conference on Growth Management in Washington State. The first thing I learned is that we had been in the minority in taking public transport the day before: only 3 percent of commuters in the Seattle area are using busses and trains. (Alex lives in Portland, Oregon, where it is closer to 60 percent.) We listen to a most amazing address by Rosemarie Ives, the Mayor of Redmond WA. She is much more of an environmental activist than most of the environmentalists I have met on the East coast. She requires all of her department heads to read Eben Fodor's book "The Cost of Growth in Washington State." She has presided over an actual decrease in the size of the urban area in spite of the pressures of increased population. Transportation and affordable housing are her chief concerns. With Washington expecting 90,000 new residents every year for the foreseeable future, every city should have a mayor like Mrs. Ives.

Oct. 15 - Now I'm settling in for a week of reading, walking, and generally enjoying the company

An environmentalist's Northwest journal

of Alex and his girlfriend. The houses in his North Portland neighborhood seem tiny and sit on very small lots. However, the street is quiet, the sidewalks are set back, and there are three wonderful parks within walking distance. We plant bulbs for next spring's display of color.

Oct. 20 - I meet Doug Ayers and Linda Thoma at the DoubleTree Hotel, headquarters for the annual National Land Trust Rally. This is a conference of 1400 people from all over the USA (and so many other countries that they've decided this will be the last "national" rally) who are dedicated to land preservation and responsible land use. The three of us have come to learn as much as possible over the next three days. We then hope that this knowledge will help our work as board members and employees of the North Branch Land Trust.

Oct. 22 - By four o'clock, my brain is on overload. Speakers and workshop leaders have been inspiring. This morning we had a "sermon" by one of the most enthusiastic ambassadors of open space that I have ever heard. His name is Charles Jordan. Jordan is head of urban parks in Portland and I wish he were running for President. He reminded all of us that ecologists know the value of connections and as such should be in the forefront of human diversity issues. We need to excite everyone regarding the importance of our work. One of the best quotes I wrote down from his speech is "the cornerstone of a pluralistic society is respect."

Oct. 24 - Yesterday I noticed as the fog lifted along I-5 that all the valleys seemed to be filled with air pollution. Paper mills and other industrial complexes are not adding to the beauty of the scenery. I-5 itself is over-crowded. As I flew

out of Seattle on a clear morning, smog hung heavy over the city. In some ways we are lucky in Pennsylvania. We don't have to worry about rapid growth, but we certainly do have to worry about sprawl. If I learned anything on this trip it is that unplanned growth has great costs. New housing results in from \$30,000 to \$84,000 for infrastructure costs (schools, roads, fire protection, sewage and stormwater treatment, etc.) per single family dwelling! It would take a very long time to recoup those costs in property taxes! It looks to me like we have a good opportunity to use the expertise that is out there (and there is a lot!) to manage development in a sustainable way, both economically and ecologically. Washington and Oregon are struggling even though they started radical new plans ten to thirty years ago. That's because everyone seems to want to move there, including my son. But, here in PA, we seem to be building ever larger houses for ever smaller family units. This is something we can correct if we act now. Open space is too important to agriculture and tourism (our largest economic activities) and to our quality of life for us to continue unchecked.

An airplane ride is a great way to see the larger picture. York and Lancaster counties have been trying to manage their growth "in spite of" Pennsylvania's archaic land use laws. It seems very difficult to get local governments to work together on anything, let alone long-term planning. But, that is our future. Benjamin Franklin had it right in 1776 when he said, "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

Alene N. Case is a member of the board of director of the North Branch Land Trust. She lives in Trucksville.

ONLY YESTERDAY

70 Years Ago - Dec. 19, 1930 LAKE TWP. STUDENTS WRITE FOR THE POST

The home of Thomas Wisniewski at Demunds burned to the ground Saturday night. The fire was discovered by Frank Ferris of Centermoreland, who was on his way home from Dallas. The house burned to the ground in 45 minutes. It was unoccupied.

Lake Township High School students wrote columns for the Post. Yonna L. Raskin, editor-in-chief, defended the young women of the "flapper" era as equal to their grandmothers, but also as more confident and daring. Tobert Lewis, a freshman, wrote about the debilitating effect smoking cigarettes has on young athletes.

C.A. Frantz, a Dallas merchant; W.R. Heeley of Lehman, who operated a general store; and Asa P. Shaver of Kingston Twp., were listed as jurors for the next month.

60 Years Ago - Dec. 20, 1940 JIM THORPE SPENDS NIGHT WITH LOCAL FAMILY

Jim Thorpe, the greatest athlete of his generation, paid an unexpected visit to the home of the Girvan family. Bob Girvan stopped to help a motorist whose car had broken down, only to find it was the famous Olympian. They were unable to get the car started, and Girvan invited Thorpe to spend the night at his home, where Mrs. John Girvan welcomed them. The next morning he shared his life story with the family over a hearty breakfast.

Four Back Mountain boys were initiated into the Future Farmer degree: George Moore, Robert Patrick, Dymond Warmouth and Dale Warmouth.

Frank Edwards shot a Canadian lynx Saturday, while out hunting deer. Lynx were rare in the region, and Edwards planned to display the mounted trophy at Charlie Gregory's Men's Shop.

50 Years Ago - Dec. 22, 1950 SGT. KEMMERER RECOVERING

Marine Sgt. Robert Kemmerer was recovering from near death in Korea. After being wounded above the left ear and in both ankles, he was left for dead for three days after all the other men in his company were captured. Toward the end of the third day he was taken to a friendly Korean's hut, then rescued the next day.

Mrs. Alice Uhl and her daughter Becky were overcome by gas escaping from a stoker-fed furnace. Johnny and Jimmy Uhl, sleeping in another room, were not affected. Mrs. Uhl and Becky received oxygen and were examined by Dr. A.A. Mascali, and recovered quickly.

Dallas Township boys team edged Hughestown 38-37 behind Larry Sutton's field goal and foul shot in the closing seconds.

40 Years Ago - Dec. 22, 1960 LAKE-LEHMAN TO BUILD \$2 MILLION HIGH SCHOOL

Lake-Lehman received approval to build a new junior-senior high school on 43 acres of land in Lehman. The land has been owned by Willard Garey and Warren Mekeel.

Robert Hanson has sold the Crown Imperial Bowling Lanes to Tony Bonomo. The lanes in Dallas Twp. opened in October, 1956.

A search continued in the Adirondack mountains for Pierre Maheaux, brother of Mrs. Robert Maxwell, Dallas. Maheaux was part of the crew of a bomber that crashed Dec. 9 near Schroon Lake.

30 Years Ago - Dec. 22, 1970 DALLAS MAN HELPS STRAIGHTEN OUT STATE

Patrick A. Mulloy, Dallas was one of the authors of a massive modernization plan for the Pennsylvania Department of State. Mulloy serves in the Office of Environmental Affairs.

Dave Jones, Dallas graduate, led Bloomsburg State College to a 76-70 win over Kutztown, going 11-for-11 from the foul line.

20 Years Ago - Dec. 24, 1980 RICCI CARRIES ON HOLIDAY TRADITION

The Dallas Lions Club raised over \$1,100 for sight conservation programs by raffling off a wheelbarrow of cheer. Gary Cutter of Dallas was the lucky winner.

Tracy Turner scored 28 points, but didn't get much help as the Lake-Lehman girls basketball team fell to Pittston 57-38.

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