

EDITORIAL

# A year of suffering, learning about ourselves and others

As the one-year anniversary of the 9/11/01 attacks passes, Americans are enveloped by a morass of reruns, tributes and mawkish commentary about the single worst loss of life ever in a foreign incursion on our soil. It may not be wise to add to the pile, but I think much of it misses the point, and the sheer volume of it masks some inalienable truths about our society.

The tragedy and its aftermath struck most horribly in New York City, whose champions like to call it the capital of the world. That claim may be tiresome American braggadocio, but there's no disputing New York as the cultural and commercial hub of the nation that is — at the moment — unquestionably the most powerful and influential on Earth. Given that, toppling the World Trade Center towers was a remarkably stunning feat that surely brought perverse joy to the hearts of millions of envious people around the globe. That singular moment also destroyed the complacent sense of entitlement we developed over decades spent watching less fortunate people starve, suffer and die from the comfort of our living rooms.

"Did we bring these attacks on ourselves?" some have asked, seemingly ready to answer affirmatively in the next breath. The answer, of course, is no, we did not. One of the foremost strengths of our culture is the great value we place on personal responsibility, whether in the realm of work, family or religion. The concept that killing thousands of innocent civilians could be justified by their nation's misguided or misunderstood policies simply holds no currency with us, or with any reasonable people who live in the modern world.

That truth, though, doesn't let us completely off the hook regarding our relations to the rest of the Earth's people, or even with our own citizens. Our prosperity and freedom don't come without a price, whether it is counted in the lives of soldiers defending the nation, the loss of rainforest to feed our material desires, or our responsibility to hold fast to the principles that have carried us so far, even when it means temporary inconvenience or expense.

9/11/01 was an enormous tragedy for the more than 3,000 individuals who died that dark day, their families, and the nation as a whole. But we have responded and largely recovered with remarkable swiftness. Now, in addition to rebuilding the World Trade Center site, we must assess what we have learned from that horrific day, both in a technical and human sense, and plan how we will respond. We know this:

- We don't want to again go through a tragedy like 9/11/01, yet the fear that we will lurks in the back of our minds.

- No one deserves our respect and gratitude more than emergency service personnel, whether paid or volunteers. They are best personified by the Fire Department of New York, which lost 343 members who died trying to save others in the Trade Center. The firefighters are paid a fraction of what many of the people they were charged with saving earn, but we now understand more than before that the value of their work cannot be measured in currency.

- The resilience of the American people and our system of government and commerce is the best evidence that, while far from perfect, our nation offers a superior example to people who are caught in the grip of dictatorship, whether by an individual or a belief system. Americans of all colors, creeds and status have joined to honor the lives lost and defend the nation against future attacks, a far cry from societies in which fathers murder their own daughters for the slightest moral failing.

One lesson should be crystal clear. The United States is strong because we as a people can choose our leaders and means of support and we can influence the most fundamental national aims and goals. It is you and I, not a handful of religious, ethnic or corporate elites that ultimately decide what kind of nation we will be. We may be unhappy with our government and its policies, but we know change is possible — even likely — if it strays too far from the desires of the majority, as long as we exercise the rights granted in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. That knowledge tempers our anger, and assures that, with the exception of a lunatic fringe that is present in every culture, we will not blame others for our own failings.

There is another obvious point that seems lost on our President and his closest advisers: that we are at our best as an example of freedom, not as a bully who enforces its will on weaker nations. We have no divine right to tear down Iraq or other societies with which we disagree, nor should we prop up ossified monarchies like Saudi Arabia for the sake of stable oil prices. Instead, we must take a leadership role, not only in military might and global commerce, but in humanitarian affairs, developing and supporting innovative approaches to age-old problems such as famine and disease, which still haunt the majority of the people with whom we share this planet.

We cannot ignore the hatred that spawned this tragedy, and neither can we condone or excuse it. There may be reasons — even irrational ones — why so many people want to see the U.S. brought to its knees, but there is no justification for the actions of 9/11/01. As we rebuild the brick and mortar and restore the lives that were shattered on that morning, we also must hold fast to the ideals on which this nation was founded, and be prepared to face the fury of those who would tear us down, rather than build up the hopes and lives of their own people.



Remembering 9/11. Stone towers and flags overlooking Isleboro Harbor, Maine.

Photo contributed by Nancy Baird, Dallas.

LETTERS

## 'Public' missing from PA utility commission

Editor, Everything is for sale; it's just a matter of agreeing on the price. It seems this has become the motto for Northeastern Pennsylvania. With the sale of our watershed in early 2000 for \$300 per acre and now the sale of our local water utility (PAWC) to a German firm (RWE) a continent away, it seems that we have traded our future and security for a few dollars more (actually a few Euros more).

In litigation before the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, Defend Our Watershed! and Penn Future asked simply for the permanent protection of the 500-foot buffers around our reservoirs in the form of easements. We also requested money be set aside for the purchase of watershed land. (Seemingly not a big deal for a company with control of assets in the billions.) These easements would have protected this land from development and helped protect our water supply from possible contamination.

Instead, the PUC ignored the concerns of the citizens, legislators, and business interests who spoke out at the public hearings. It seems we misunderstood the role of the "public" in the Public Utility Commission.

Let's recap our current situation. The water supply of Northeastern PA and its distribution system are now in foreign hands. The watershed is in the hands of a mystery owner. These are assets of "strategic economic importance." Does our future seem secure? At the Huntsville reservoir development has already occurred at the water's edge. Our new German utility friend wants to keep this option open since it rejected the idea of easements and wants to allow the "unencumbered ownership and control" of this land. Why has the PUC ignored the voices of so many in the Northeast? Where do the true interests of the PUC lie?

It's clearly time for a change in

the PUC and its decision making process. If the hours of public testimony at the hearings can be so blatantly ignored, then it's time to reconsider the mission and purpose of the PUC. Its interests obviously do not lie in the public realm. State Rep. George Hasay was on the right track when he recommended that "we have to get some environmentally minded members on the PUC in the future." If Pennsylvania is to be "open for business," then its agencies, such as the PUC, must not sacrifice the safety and security of its citizens in the process.

Defend Our Watershed! and its growing list of allies will continue to fight this battle. As the list of injustices grows, so does our commitment. Our goal remains a safe, secure water supply and permanently protected watershed. Defend Our Watershed!

Paul Niezgoda  
Defend Our Watershed!  
Jackson Township

## Fair organizers grateful for support, turnout

Editor, On behalf of the Luzerne County Fair Committee we would like to thank everyone who helped make the Luzerne County Fair a rousing success again this year.

On several days we had record breaking attendance and we especially wish to thank everyone attending on those days.

To the vendors, we hope you had a very successful fair and made lots of money. See you next year.

To the people who make this a county fair, the livestock and Arts and Craft people, you did another great labor of love. The committee appreciates the time and effort you have put into the grooming and preparations for the fair.

To the public, thank you for help making this county fair what has become. A family event in the truest form possible.

To the media, thank you for all the coverage you gave the fair.

To the 500 or more volunteers,

you are the backbone to the fair. Without you we would be nothing. We may get aggravated with some people. We know deep in our heart you are the glue that binds.

If we have left anyone out, it is not intentional. Northeast and Central Pennsylvania, and points far and near, thank you.

Donna Cupinski,  
Fair Chairman  
Susan Stephens,  
Public Relations, Chairperson

## Computer classes start soon

on the afternoon of October 1 and repeated on October 8, 15, 22, and 29. It will also be presented in two morning sessions on October 10 and 24. Registration is now going on for both classes. There is a limit of five persons per class, so sign up early by calling 675-1182.

**Golf tournament:** The Sixth Annual Par 4 Cafe' Golf Classic for the benefit of the Back Mountain Memorial Library will be held on Monday, Sept. 30, at the Irem Temple Country Club in Dallas. Registration will start at 11 a.m., with a 12 noon shotgun start. The format is Captain and Crew. The entry fee of \$100

per person includes a cart, greens fees, lunch, dinner, beverages throughout the day, and chances to win great prizes, including a sunroom from Bittner and Company for a hole-in-one on #17, and a 2002 Chevrolet Avalanche from Valley Chevrolet for a hole-in-one on #7. Entries are limited to the first 30 four-somes, so sign up now for a good cause and a day of fun. The library has copies of the entry form.

**Gift to library:** Marshall Rumbaugh, the artist who sculpted the beautiful mural

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Carol King

The Back Mountain Memorial Library is again offering computer classes to its patrons. A session on Microsoft Word will be held on September 16 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., and repeated on September 19. A class on the use of the Internet will be held

ONLY YESTERDAY



70 Years Ago - Sept. 9, 1932

### COUNCIL DROPS POLICE CHIEF; HIRES O'KANE

Dallas borough council in a meeting dismissed Elwood Elston, borough police officer by a 4 to 3 vote and elected Leonard O'Kane, high constable in his place.

Dallas borough school board at its meeting voted to pay off all teacher's back salaries and approved action of the teachers committee in cooperation with Kingston township in the exchange of teachers.

Some of the items you could get at the A & P stores: peas, 3 cans 23¢; pineapple 2 cans 23¢; potatoes, 15 lb. peck 17¢; Red Circle coffee, lb. 23¢; nut bread, loaf 15¢.

60 Years Ago - Sept. 4, 1942

### YOUTH SAVES LIVES OF TWO LAKE SWIMMERS

Leo George, seventeen-year-old kitchen boy at Lakeside Inn, Harveys Lake, saved the lives of two children from drowning when he jumped off a dock in front of the inn and broke the strangle hold one of the children had on the other.

A.N. Garinger's racing pigeon, came in first in the 100-mile race from Harrisburg, conducted by the Wyoming Valley Racing Pigeons Association.

First Back Mountain physician to enter military service is Dr. Charles A. Perkins of trucksville, who has been commissioned a First Lieutenant in the United States Medical Corps.

50 Years Ago - Sept. 19, 1952

### GIVE \$500 DOLLARS FOR NEW FIRE TRUCK

Members of Dr. Henry M. Iaing Fire Company Auxiliary voted to give \$500 from their reserve fund toward the purchase of a new fire engine.

The promotion of Col. John P. Kirkendall, deputy wing commander at Keesler AFB, Miss., to rank of brigadier general has been announced by Headquarters, USAF, Washington, D.C. General Kirkendall is native of Dallas.

Louis Banta, Kingston Township police officer for the past five years and recently the center of controversy which led to his being given a hearing on charges of insubordination by Kingston Township Supervisors, has resigned.

40 Years Ago - Sept. 13, 1962

### GROUND BREAKING FOR NEW COLLEGE BUILDINGS

College Misericordia's ground-breaking ceremony for the Alumnae Residence Hall and Merrick Student Center was held on the campus site, adjoining Hafey Science Building.

Frank L. McGarry, Main Street, Dallas, rammed his car through two plate-glass windows and cracked another in the front of Gosart's Appliance Center.

An additional 26 acres of land and another roadway were added to the Dallas Township Community Forest. Attorney Frank Townend, solicitor for the Board of Supervisors, and Attorney James L. Brown solicitor for Back Mountain Protective Association, will carry out the final arrangements on the contract.

30 Years Ago - Sept. 7, 1972

### INMATES PLEAD NOT GUILTY TO CHARGES OF MURDER

At a hearing in front of District Magistrate Leonard Harvey two inmates at the Dallas Correctional Institution, Glenn X. Jordan and Freddy X. Butler, were held over for grand jury action on charges of murder. Charges were stemmed from the death of Thomas Wilson, also a Dallas inmate, victim of an alleged stabbing incident at the prison.

The Flood Victims Action Committee voted to send President Nixon a telegram requesting that

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# The Dallas Post

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