

EDITORIAL

# Now is the time to decide what we want to become

A series of occurrences have conspired to focus attention on the business climate in the Back Mountain. They also make clear that we — elected officials, the general public, existing businesses and institutions and regional planners — must chart a path for our future before it is determined by forces beyond our control.

A proposed large retail store in Dallas Township has led to serious discussions about traffic congestion in adjoining Dallas Borough. This is a new experience here; it has been rare for one municipality's concerns to influence another, even though we share so many borders and facilities. The loss of several hundred jobs has raised other challenges, as stores, restaurants and service businesses wonder how to replace customers who stopped by at lunch time, and who enjoyed the experience of working within little more than walking distance of home.

There are hopeful signs amid the gloom, among them the looming formation of a Council of Governments (COG) and the visioning exercise now being conducted primarily in Dallas Borough but with wide-ranging implications. But we need to look even further for resources that can assist us, and one organization that can play an important role is the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry. Their expertise and contacts could prove invaluable as we try to plot a more secure future while preserving the characteristics that have made these the most desirable communities in Luzerne County. Before they can truly help, though, there needs to form a clear understanding of what we want the Back Mountain to be like, then, everyone involved must be willing to coordinate their efforts toward a common goal.

Right now, the Chamber seems to see the Back Mountain only as an affluent residential area where incoming executives and professionals are given the grand tour of upscale developments. While that is certainly one aspect of our communities, it is far from the whole picture. This has always been a self-sufficient region that contained commerce and residences, and it's likely most of us would like to maintain that balance, rather than become just another prettified bedroom community.

We hope the growing sense of cooperation between the individual towns that make up the Back Mountain will help us to form a coherent strategy that will have all of our considerable human and natural assets moving in the same direction. Then, we should expect regional development organizations like the Chamber to put their muscle behind our dreams to help them become reality.

## Publisher's Notebook

Ron Bartizek



The response to the death of a Major League Baseball player, suspected to have been caused in part by his use of a supplement containing ephedrine, has been interesting in its intensity. In the days immediately following Steve Bechler's death several retailers removed items containing ephedrine from their shelves. But the effect ephedrine has on the heart was no surprise; the chemical has been linked to other deaths and its tendency to contribute to heatstroke and heart problems is well-documented. Other major sports organizations, including the National Football League, the NCAA and the International Olympic Committee have put ephedrine on their lists of banned substances. In the NFL's case, that happened shortly after Minnesota Vikings' lineman Corey Stringer died of heatstroke during training camp in August 2001 and ephedrine was found in his body.

Why then, did CVS, General Nutrition and other stores suddenly get religion? Maybe, as my father-in-law the banker always said, it comes down to economics — in this case fear of a lawsuit, or many of them. It's highly doubtful any great concern for the healthfulness of these or other supplements was the motivation; if it was, half the shelves at these and other stores would be bare. Surely, if the stores were that worried about selling harmful products they would have dropped cigarettes years ago.

I'm not sure what to think of a situation like this. If these products are legal, I guess it's up to each individual to decide whether or not to use them. That position raises the question of whether substances known to be risky should be allowed on store shelves, and then we have to ask why government hasn't done a better job of screening them out of the system, or at least making an effort to inform users of the risks, in something larger than mouse type.

I must give credit where it's due. In past years, this page has criticized the performance of road crews cleaning snow off Routes 309 and 415. Well, I thought they did a very good job with the Presidents Day storm; by Tuesday morning the highways were pretty much clear, without the rutted travel lanes we've become accustomed to seeing. That's a great improvement even over December, when the Christmas storm wasn't handled nearly as well. Perhaps that was understandable, given the timing, but I certainly hope the latest experience reflects a new standard.



Goose on ice, Newberry Estate, Dallas. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

## AMERICAN LEGION ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

Editor's Note: Here are the winning essays in essay contest for Dallas and Lake-Lehman high school students sponsored by the Dallas-Isaacs Post 672 of the American Legion. Students were asked to write on the theme, "Freedom after 9/11."

### My America following September 11, 2001

Peter VanLoon

As many tragedies have occurred throughout modern history, common threads have been present within these events, which have had and will continue to, when they occur, have a profound effect on the actions, minds, and hearts of those that were affected by them. Tragedies have in part, shaped history and made it what it is. In shaping history, they have produced results and large impacts, commonly and recently, leading to unification of peoples and nations. When considering the events that occurred on September 11, 2001 and the way that America has taken shape as a result of those events, at least in my mind, the country has fallen into this commonality of unification and has become a stronger and more defined nation.

Although the attacks on September 11, 2001 were designed to negatively affect the United States and weaken it in spirit, as a nation, and as a superpower amongst the international community, the adverse oc-

curred. This happened as a factor that those that fostered these attacks did not consider, became more fervent and responded in a way that was unexpected. This factor is one of the key distinctive qualities of the people of this great nation that has led it to and will continue to lead it through times of difficulty and to times of prosperity. This factor is the character and will of the American people, and the ability of our people to endure and respond to any situation presented to them. This was evident as after the attacks, the country, like it had in another earlier time of tragedy that occurred when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, came together, became stronger and more united, and responded with the necessary measures. Like it had in 1941 and the years following the Japanese raid, the American public was awakened from a period of isolation and a feeling of security to become more aware of the country's international stature and role in the world. In modern times, when many nations around the world

are attempting to become a greater and more powerful player on the international stage and lessen the overall stance of the United States as a power with a grip over this stage, many factors including the character and will of their people will make the difference and continue to set them back. For the reason that America is such a modern international super power is not due to the natural resources, the size, or the location of the country, but the will and character of its people and this was especially shown after the attacks on September 11, 2001.

Within this character of the people of America there has always been a sense that is not replicated in any other country in the world and that is the willingness of the people to serve the nation in its times of need. Although I, personally, had heard the call to serve and protect my country before the attacks, the events strengthened my commitment to serve in the United States Armed Forces, as I am sure it has for many others. I made this com-

mitment as I as an American, felt the need to serve especially in the times of war that is now necessary loom ahead after the country lost its sense of security and is becoming more aware of the many threats to this great nation, that lay around the world.

The United States, the greatest nation present in the world, will never forget the tragedy that occurred on September 11, 2001, but has acted as its has in the past and has grown to become a stronger nation as a result of them. Although the attacks were designed to weaken the nation and strike fear into the minds of the public, the opposite occurred as the resolve and character of the people of this nation answered and responded to unify and answer the country's needs. This is the reason that America has become and will continue to be such a powerful nation on the international stage.

Peter VanLoon is a senior at Dallas High School. He has been accepted into the Air Force Academy.

### Freedom After 9/11

By Lorraine Lovecchio

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America..." These words are taught to children in kindergarten. Children at the age of five can easily recite the pledge if asked too. Teenagers have recited it thousands of times. Millions of adults can just rattle it off in seconds. But what is it? What is the pledge? Up until two years ago most thought of it as just something to say if you were American. Kids thought of it as a nifty poem that they had memorized. Teens in high school viewed it as a hassle that required you to stand up, which made them exert too much energy in the mornings. And adults only recited it at the sporting events they went to. The pledge's meaning was lost somewhere along on our journey of freedom. The national anthem was only a pretty song that millions waited to hear before the Super Bowl. The flag was a decoration. And veterans were just men. We as a nation truly believed that freedom was free, with no strings attached.

September 11th 2000. Our country started another day.

The leading story on Good Morning America was Michael Jordan's return to basketball. Millions of students had already stood up and recited that poem they had memorized. Adults were at work not giving America a second thought. Planes were flying all over the country getting people to where they need to be. The President was visiting an elementary school. Tests were being given. Little Susie was celebrating her birthday. This ordinary day soon changed. Two planes hit the Twin Towers, one hit the Pentagon, and a fourth crashed in Pennsylvania. Everything stopped. Millions of Americans forgot all about their jobs and their tests. No one remembered that they were excited about Jordan playing basketball. People forgot about Susie's birthday. All the American public could think was how "nothing will ever be the same".

That day the Pledge of Allegiance returned to a state of importance. The National Anthem put tears back into people's eyes. Flags were hung on homes and cars alike. Veterans were more than just men, they were heroes. That day did change America; it made us prouder. It

made us stronger. In New York the dust and dirt from the Twin Towers coated the faces of all of the people around the collapse. It put a mask on their faces. Black and white, Jewish and Catholic, rich and poor, all looked alike. They all looked like Americans. Racial and religious barriers were torn down, all people were equal. While the day was terrifying it was also miraculous. Patriotism was awakened in every heart. And freedom was no longer taken for granted.

Before September 11th world saw a great country that had become overconfident, on September 11th the world witnessed that great country stumble, on September 12th the world witnessed a great country become greater. After the terrorist attack the American public appreciated freedom more. It was no longer taken for granted. Freedom was no longer viewed as being free. And it was celebrated. It is celebrated in the classrooms, it is celebrated on Veterans and Memorial Day, it is celebrated on Presidents Day. America's freedom was threatened on 9/11, but it was not destroyed.

It is no secret that freedom isn't easy. You can't just want

freedom you must crave it, because it's going to put up a fight. We have seen it. We have learned about it in our history classes, we have heard about it from veterans, and we have experienced it on 9/11. Freedom isn't a gift, it is a privilege and it has got to be earned. Americans forgot this, and it was disastrous. But now that we remember we have come to the realization that it would be hazardous to our country if we ever again forgot that freedom wasn't easy.

September 11th didn't destroy our nation. It saddened us but it didn't destroy us. The terrorists failed. This thing we call freedom. This thing they tried to destroy by using planes as bombs. This thing they tried to take away from America. This freedom was strengthened. Now, when saying the Pledge of Allegiance it is more than a poem it is a vow. The National Anthem is not just a song it is a declaration of our strength and spirit. We are proud to proclaim that we are America "...the land of the free and the home of the brave."

Lorraine Lovecchio is a senior at Lake-Lehman High School. She will attend the University of Scranton this fall.

## The Dallas Post

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### Letters invited

Letters to the editor are welcome and will be published, subject to the following guidelines:

- Letters should not exceed 500 words.
- No writer may have more than one letter published during a 30-day period, except as a reply to another letter.
- Letters must be signed and include the writer's home town and a telephone number for verification.

• Names will be withheld only if there exists a clear threat to the writer.

• The Post retains the right to accept or reject any letter, and to edit letters for grammar and spelling, as well as to eliminate any libel, slander or objectionable wording.

In addition to letters, we welcome longer pieces that may run as columns. The author or subject's relevance to the Back Mountain will be the prime consideration when selecting material for publication.