

OUR OPINION

Local educators rise above phony 'standards'

Bob Roberts has been an educator for 33 years, and he's seen just about everything over those three decades. But even he is astounded at the simplistic approach taken by the federal government's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act. Last year, Lake-Lehman elementary schools were cited because attendance declined less than one-tenth of 1 percent, despite the fact that student performance handily exceeded targets set by the same legislation. Roberts' frustration is understandable, and is probably magnified by the inspiration for the untenable standards his schools are being held to.

The federal Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, earned his pass to the marbled halls of the nation's capital largely because of the performance of the Houston, Texas school system when he was superintendent. That city's schools — according to facts and figures provided by administrators in recent years — were a model of success, despite serving a typical poor, urban student body. Dropout rates were incredibly low and nearly every high school senior planned to attend college, or so the statistics said. But the truth is beginning to trickle out, and it appears the schools being held up as an ideal for the nation aren't what they seem. A closer look at attendance records, for example, has found that students who might have raised the dropout rate to a realistic level were simply made to disappear by magically transferring to private schools at which they never showed up. And those incredibly optimistic seniors who filled out forms saying they planned to attend college, despite not even taking the SAT test? Well, most of them didn't actually attend any classes, and of those that did, many found they were ill-prepared for college and did not continue their education.

So far, this reality hasn't shaken Dr. Paige's faith in testing and statistics, and there has been no suggestion that NCLB standards — which will eventually require that every single student in every single school be tested as proficient or advanced — could use a review. That makes his vision of America's public schools sound a little like the fictional Lake Woe-begone, where all the children are above average.

You don't need a Ph.D. to know that there are only two ways to achieve such perfection; either kick out everyone who doesn't fit the mold, or fudge the figures. It appears the benchmarks that frustrate Roberts and other conscientious educators were established using both methods. Thankfully, he and others who take responsibility for our children's education have higher standards than that, and their dedication and honesty should not be compromised by phony benchmarks.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

It was spectacular moment. With tires squealing and the sleek silver coupe lurching toward the guard rail, the handsome driver struggled to maintain control through the esses as he took aim at the bright red race car just ahead. It would take just a few more laps to claim the lead and cross the finish line, then leap from his bucket seat, waving in victory to the adoring crowd. But alas, it was not to be.



RON BARTIZEK

Passing, you see, is forbidden when trying out Watkins Glen International Raceway. And that bright red racer? It was really a Blazer, used as the pace car for any Walter Mitty with \$25 to spare and the desire to take three laps around a real race track. But it was still fun to take that spin, family members strapped in tight, and there were some unexpected bright spots. First, the pace car driver ignored the 55 mile per hour maximum listed on the brochure, gunning it right from the start when he saw what a capable man and machine were behind him. And I did open up a lead on the minivan filled with kids, luggage and a dog that was right behind us at the start.

Any one of us would do well to inspire the respect and admiration that are the legacy of Jane Yocum, the Shavertown wife, mother and tireless volunteer who will be remembered at this weekend's "Jane Fest." The event, in its second year, is a celebration of Jane's life and a fundraiser for the Susan G. Komen Foundation, which works to eradicate breast cancer, the illness that claimed Jane Yocum's life at far too young an age. The first Jane Fest raised \$12,000, which was donated to support programs for cancer victims and efforts to screen for the disease.

Jane Fest takes place this Saturday at the Irem Temple Country Club pavilion, starting at 4 p.m. With six bands, snacks and a buffet, free soda and beer plus a cash bar, the event promises to be the kind of positive experience its name-sake would relish, as well as a great public service. For information, call 675-6573.

Letters, columns and editorials

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.

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P.O. BOX 366, DALLAS, TX 75201 • 570-675-5211
dallaspost@leader.net

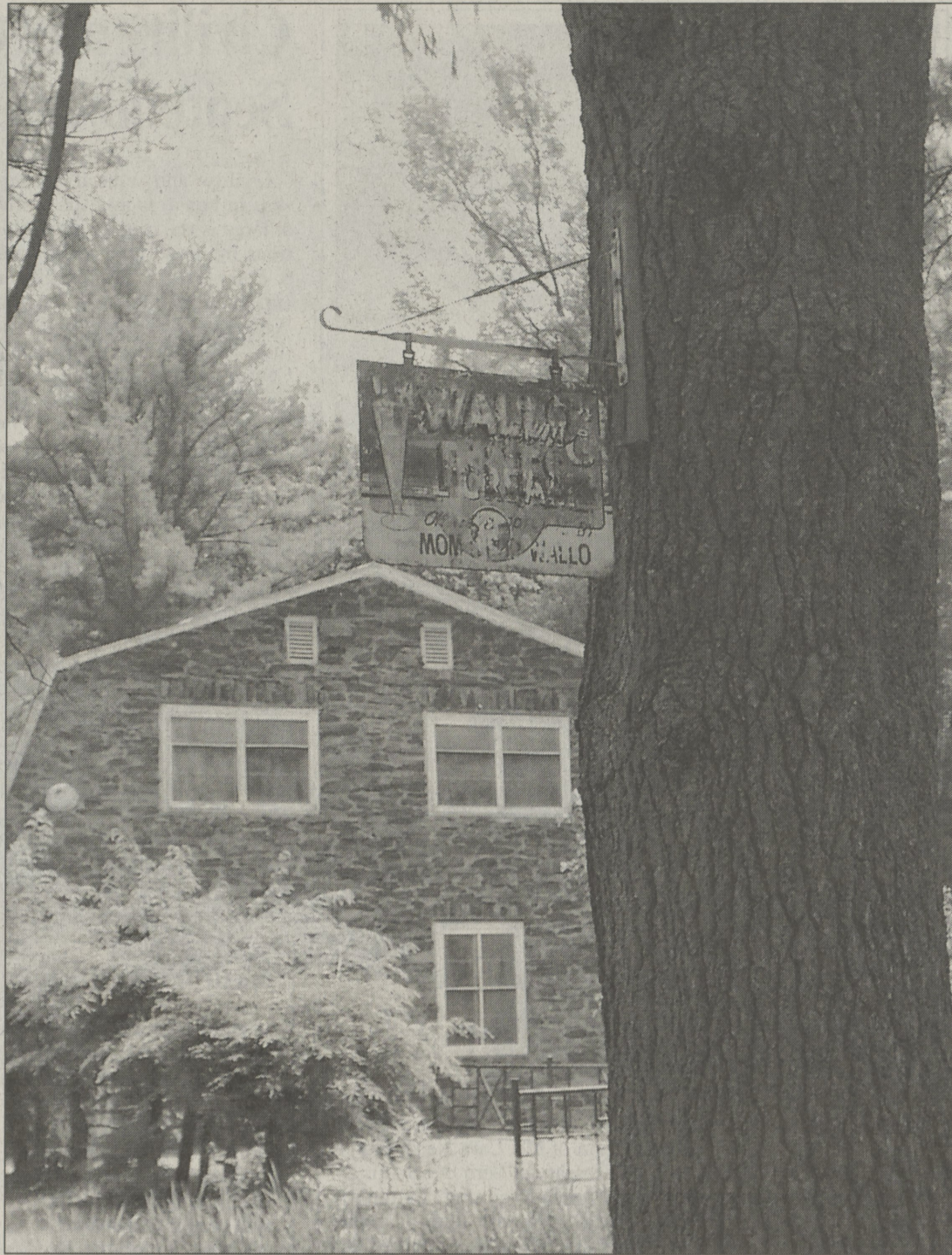
Ronald Bartizek
EDITOR/GENERAL MANAGER

Justin Wisnosky
ADVERTISING ACCT. EXEC.

Erin Youngman
REPORTER

Darlene E. Sorber
OFFICE MANAGER

Claudia Blank
AD PRODUCTION MANAGER



What tales of summer were told at Wallo Pines? Photo by Ron Bartizek.

LETTERS

Region in danger of losing its appeal

Editor,
In a letter to the editor last week, a writer suggested that people who don't like the rapid development of the Back Mountain should move out to the country and buy 100 acres.

Well, we moved to Pennsylvania from New York in 1988 to live in the country where we expected to enjoy clean air and clean water. What we found was that the air smelled every morning from P&G's pulp mill, our neighbors openly burned household trash, the wooded hillsides were littered with mattresses, tires and old refrigerators and big noisy trucks went up and down our road daily to the local stone yard.

We served on a committee that worked for two years trying to get a creek designated a scenic waterway, but that effort was squashed by farmers who were afraid they would lose land rights. We also participated in a fight to stop a gravel pit from moving into the area and ruining 100 acres of farmland which included Indian burial grounds along the river, but that fight was lost too. It was rumored that a pig farm was coming to the area and we heard that you can smell those

farms from miles away. So, what good is living in the country if you have no control over land, air and water use in the surrounding areas? Not everyone can afford to buy 100 acres to surround themselves with.

Five years ago, we moved to the Back Mountain where our family enjoys living very much. Yes, there is development and we accept that to a degree. Most of it is widely publicized and open meetings are usually held with the local authorities whereby residents can voice their concerns either for or against whatever has been proposed before authorization is granted to proceed with a project.

However, when the trees started falling along Sago Street, we called the zoning officer to inquire as to what the plans were for the property and he informed us that no plans had been submitted. So the landowner proceeded with his supposed "site preparation" with no plans, no permits, no authorization, no public meeting and no chance for residents to object until it was too late. Now there are no trees, no wildlife, the stream is in danger of being polluted from run off,

mud is washing down into the properties on the street below and the road noise from Rt. 309 gets louder every day. Are we just supposed to accept that as part of development? Should we just run away to the country or stay and fight to protect the way of life we have come to enjoy in this area?

Don't the people of Pennsylvania realize that their resources are precious and if they don't start to regulate land use, they will see more and more of those resources disappear? Oftentimes blame is put on people like us who move in from New York, New Jersey and other areas, but we are just taking advantage of the things local people take for granted. Many times we are fighting harder to protect the beauty of this state than they are because we know all too well what can happen from over development. Sadly, without any regulations, you will come to find that there will be no "country" left to move away to anymore. No clean water, no wildlife, no fresh air to breathe and no quiet place to hear yourself think.

Lorraine Redlich
Chris Redlich
Dallas Township

Home rule charter won't get his vote

Editor,
I have read the proposed Home Rule Charter for Luzerne County and have also attended meetings, but feel the need to express myself. When I was at the Home Study Charter Meeting I brought up the fact that we would not be voting for our row officers and the board addressed their reason. Although I believe we need change on our county's current level and also believe the commission board did a great job in what they came up with, after reviewing the charter they proposed, there are a few things I disagree with. One item I'm not totally happy about in the charter is taking my rights as an American citizen to vote on whom I want handling the county. I am not ready to give those rights up.

With the proposed charter

like it is, I will be forced to vote no on the Home Rule. I believe that giving up our rights to elect row officers such as clerk of courts, sheriff, recorder of deeds, coroner, treasurer, prothonotary, jury commissioner, register of wills, is not a wise idea. Home Rule favors appointed department heads giving us no control.

I also believe that the commission should limit the terms of the council members as well as the appointed heads, to insure that the county is ever changing with new people and new ideas. I believe politicians, like diapers, need to be changed often and for the same reason.

If the Home Rule does not pass I know our county will be in good hands with the re-election of Steve Urban and the new voices of Todd Vonderheid

and Greg Skrepenak. These three honest and respected men will work great together to assure our county gets back on the right track. This is what we need, not a new system of government. I believe also that it's the people, not the format, that makes the government corrupt.

Now, I am not putting the proposed charter down all together, these people worked hard on it. I am just stating my opinion, and in fact I for one believe great things are about to happen to Luzerne County and even with things like they are now, we will be in better hands come January 2004. I urge all residents to read the proposed charter and then make a decision for themselves.

Christopher S. Concert
Shavertown

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

A: Only in The Dallas Post

70 Years Ago -
September 8, 1933

TOWNSHIP SCHOOL BOARD AGREES TO PAY AUDITORS

Dallas Township school board, which postponed payment of a bill presented by auditors because members be-



ONLY YESTERDAY

lieved the amount was exorbitant, agreed to pay the bill, after F.F. Honeywell, one of the auditors had addressed the directors for nearly an hour upholding the fairness of the change the auditors made.

Jackson Guernsey, of Shavertown, an instructor at Wilkes-Barre Academy, returned from an 8,000 mile trip across United States during which bus and a bicycle were his means of transportation. Guernsey travelled 5,800 miles by bus and 2,200 miles by bicycle.

Collection of delinquent taxes was the main topic of discussion at the meeting of Dallas Borough council. They showed that a net gain of 240 per cent, had been made this year over previous years in the matter of collecting delinquent borough taxes.

60 Years Ago -
September 10, 1943

CEASES PURCHASE FIRST WAR BONDS

The first in the Agricultural Division in the Third war bond Drive to purchase War Bonds were Mr. and Mrs. W.A. Cease, of Trucksville. Mr. and Mrs. Cease's son lost his life when attached by Japanese Zero while flying over Java.

At a meeting of Dalals Township SchoolBoard, plans were made to engage Arthiteth Thomas Atherton to lay out additional athletic fields at the high school. Township directors believed that since they have plenty of available space, they should contribute to the war effort by providing fields and equipment to develop their youth physically.

The names of 126 young men and women who have left Dallas Borough to enter their country's service will be inscribed on the new honor roll which is being erected on Main street.

50 Years Ago -
September 4, 1953

DALLAS BOROUGH BUYS OLIVER PROPERTY

Dallas Borough Council voted unanimously to purchase the Oliver property on Main Street for a Borough Building at a price not to exceed \$25,000. It was previously offered to the borough for \$38,000, a figure considered to high by Councilmen for borough purposes.

Coon Certified Concrete Company opened a new hot asphalt plant at North mountain Crushed Stone Quarry located on the George Steltz farm one-fourth mile west of Route 415 in Pike's Creek. A 10,000 gallon storage tank has been erected to handle the storage of asphalt which will be brought in by trucks.

F. Gordon Mathers of Mathers Construction company, has purchased 145 feet along the highway from Mrs. Harry Harter and will prepare the ground for a modern new service station.

40 Years Ago -
September 5, 1963

LAKE-LEHMAN TO DEDICATE HIGH SCHOOL

Lake-Lehman will dedicate its new high school at impressive evening exercises in the recently accepted building. Presiding will be Lester B. Squire, supervising principal.

A combined township building and fire company quarters on site of the present fire hall on Carverton Road is now a strong possibility, following the visit to Philadelphia recently of Board Chairman La-

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