

## OUR OPINION

## The state of the Back Mountain

*Editor's note: Since this was the week of the President's State of the Union address, we thought it would be a good time to reflect on how things are going in our little part of the world. It's remarkable how closely our experiences, concerns, and hopes parallel those reflected in national news headlines.*

Let us start by assuring our audience that the state of the Back Mountain is generally good. Events and activities took place over the past year that point to an even brighter future in which we who live and work here can have confidence. Perhaps none stands out more than the enormous support and turnout for the first Dallas Harvest Festival, which attracted as many accolades as people. Nearly everyone who attended the one-day gathering expressed feelings of pride in this demonstration of the Back Mountain's diverse economic and social network. Service clubs, family farmers and business people clamored for precious display space, and their faces beamed as brightly as the radiant sun that broke through the overcast. Like the library auction, which celebrated its 57th year, the festival provides a charming opportunity for neighbors to renew friendships and develop new ones, relationships that are the bedrock upon which a healthy community is built.

Great progress was made in addressing current and potential threats to our quality of life. The Dallas Community Visioning program, which is having an impact throughout the region, was the source of many good ideas and not a small amount of action. The most notable item on its agenda was the push to construct a "roundabout" at the center of Dallas, where the intersection of five streets fosters traffic jams out of character with this place. With a great deal of encouragement from PENNDOT, plans appear to be moving ahead, with a very real possibility of construction within two years. Aside from relieving the congestion, this unique feature could present an attractive centerpiece for the Back Mountain, something we have lacked as housing and strip centers have been built willy-nilly.

There is also hope for a jointly authorized master plan to direct development in a more logical, compatible manner. A new Council of Governments (COG) has committed to a comprehensive study by a firm with experience in communities facing "sprawl" issues, with the expectation that a blueprint for controlled growth will emerge.

Progress has also been made in creating a regional park in Lehman Township that would contain playing fields, trails, courts and other facilities for organized sports, recreation and relaxation.

By now you probably sense a common theme in much of the good news: cooperation across municipal lines. For many years we haven't let those borders prevent us from worshipping, playing, shopping or studying together. At last, it seems we are ready to climb over those barriers in order to fully share the benefits of our beautiful region, while protecting one another from harm that can easily spill over from one town to the next.

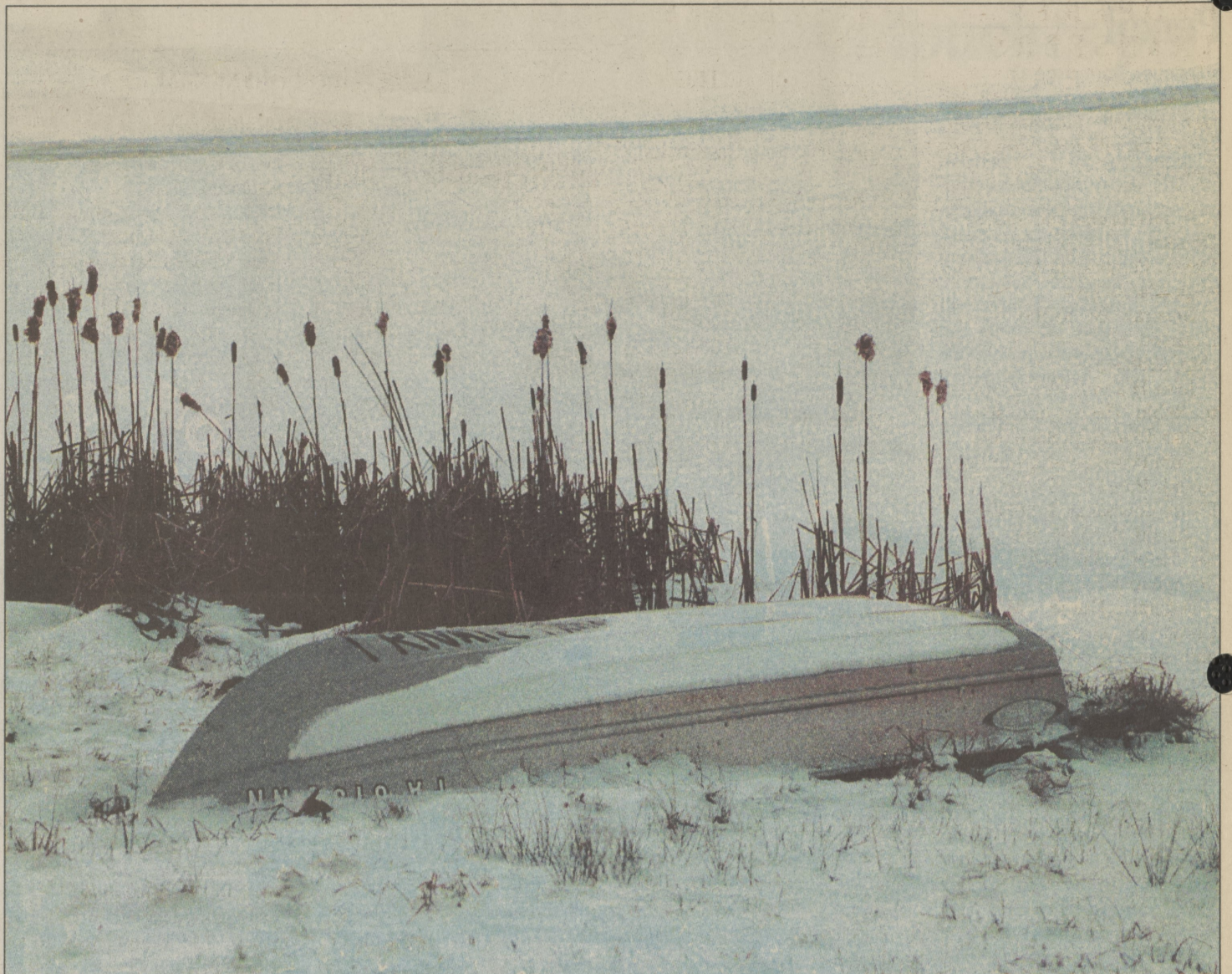
But we are not yet where we want to be, and there have been signs in the last year that much work remains to be done if this region is to reach its full potential for prosperity without sacrificing the attributes that make it such an attractive place in which to live and raise families. While there is progress on the traffic horizon, the present can be dangerous, as several fatal accidents have shown. As individuals, we have some control over the circumstances that lead to tragedy on the roadway, and it is important that each of us act responsibly when behind the wheel.

Even as we anticipate planning and zoning that will protect the environment, threats both real and suggested have reared their ugly heads. Unfortunately for Dallas Township, it has been the scene of both, with a landowner decimating a leafy hillside virtually overnight and a developer too easily gaining approval for a "big box" retail store that could have disastrous effects on nearby communities.

There also are concerns about the Back Mountain's economic base, as small stores and service businesses contend with the fallout from the shift of several hundred jobs to Wilkes-Barre and the closure of a long-time industry. Fortunately, some recovery seems to be underway, but it is imperative that growth in employment be accommodated, because a healthy local economy brings with it support for essential institutions such as the library and schools.

We have not escaped ills that affect the larger society, either. Use of dangerous illegal drugs is particularly worrisome in our youth, but it is hardly restricted to them. Many adults have become hooked on these insidious chemicals, with devastating consequences for them and us. And where there is drug use, there follows an increase in criminal activity, with its ultimate product playing out along bucolic Mount Olivet Road in the discovery of five bodies behind a home. It is important that every one of us do our part to eradicate this scourge, on a personal, family or community level.

And while no mortar shells are falling along Memorial Highway, our optimism for the future is sobered by the knowledge that our friends, parents, sons and daughters are in harm's way halfway around the world. We are no less concerned with the state of the union — or of the world — than anyone else, and we are especially aware of the risks they face as they commit mind, body and spirit to completing a mission. We would gladly sacrifice the convenience of a roundabout or the creation of a few jobs for their safe return.



Put up for a long winter rest on the shore of Glendalough Pond. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

## LIBRARY NEWS

## Auction meeting this week — come join the fun!

Next Thursday, January 29, is the date of the first meeting at the Back Mountain Memorial Library to discuss the 2004 Auction, which will take place July 8-11 — the 58th in a long chain. Everyone is invited to attend the meeting and contribute new ideas for making this auction the most successful one yet. The auction committee would welcome your input.

**CAROL KING**

Your active involvement is needed, too. What is your special interest? Flowers .. children .. books? You can help by serving

at any of these auction venues, or at the Nearly New or Odds 'n' Ends booths. Are there any antiques in your attic which you'd like to contribute to the auction? Or new or gently used items for the booths named above? Could you lend a hand for several hours the week before the auction to help set up?

As you know, auction proceeds make up a giant share of the library's funds. The library needs your help in the extra effort we must make this year to help offset the cuts made in the state's budget for libraries. Help the auction committee start off right by attending the meeting on Thursday.

The library's Board of Directors has

many ideas in the works for the future, including a program on first aid for pets, and courses on fly-making for the upcoming fishing season. Keep an eye out for announcements.

The annual meeting of the Back Mountain Memorial Library Association will be held on Tuesday, February 3 at 8 p.m. at the library. The meeting is open to the public.

My apologies to Linda Wagner for not reporting her name correctly in the article about her collection of Wizard of Oz artifacts now on display at the library. Take a look at the nostalgic display.

## New surveying/civil engineering degree at PSU Wilkes-Barre

The College of Engineering at Penn State University has recently approved a new concurrent Surveying and Civil Engineering degree. This 5-year program will allow students to earn a bachelor of science degree in Surveying and Civil Engineering. Its graduates can become licensed both as a professional land surveyor or professional engineer in all 50 states.

"By obtaining both degrees, graduates of this program expand their career op-

portunities by being able to function more flexibly in engineering and surveying firms where both areas of expertise are often in demand," said Dr. Charles D. Ghilani, professor of engineering and Surveying program chair at Penn State Wilkes-Barre. "We expect that demand for the initially limited number of graduates in this program will encourage attractive starting salaries."

Students enrolled in this program will spend three years at Penn State Wilkes-

Barre, then finish their final two years at the University Park campus. The Wilkes-Barre campus has offered the 4-year degree in surveying since 1994. Their graduates are highly sought after and, in the last 10 years, the campus has boasted 100 percent job placement rate for surveying graduates. For more information, call the Penn State Wilkes-Barre Admissions Office at 675-9238 or e-mail: wbadmissions@psu.edu.

70 Years Ago  
January 26, 1934

## WARMER QUARTERS FOR HARVEYS LAKE FIRE TRUCK

— Harveys Lake firemen, this week, made arrangements to put a stove in the garage at Allen's Mills where the truck is kept. The addition will keep the truck ready around the clock.

## ONLY YESTERDAY

— James Anderson of Main Street on Saturday celebrated his eighty-fourth birthday. He received congratulations from many friends.

— Contagious diseases, particularly Scarlet Fever, continued to be reported throughout the area, new cases are reported daily.

60 Years Ago  
January 21, 1944

## HURT IN ICE PLANT FALL

— Alfred Rogowski, 21, Pikes Creek, an employee of Bryant Ice Company, Meeker, was injured Saturday when a safety chain snapped and he fell 30 feet.

— Joseph Lavelle, Dallas father of two and Robert Gross, member of Dallas High School Basketball squad, were drafted last week for the war effort.

— The speed at which the postal service functions during these war days was

brought out last week when letters from Wilkes-Barre took five days to reach Dallas.

50 Years Ago  
January 22, 1954

## BACK MOUNTAIN HERDS CAPTURE TOP HONORS AT PA FARM SHOW

— Capturing some of the top places at the recent Pennsylvania Farm Show were Adam Goeringer Lake Louise Farm, Guernsey's and Conyngham's Hillside Farms.

— An army of mothers will soon blanket the entire Back Mountain and county when they conduct the Mother's March for Polio. Residents are urged to turn their porch lights on, if they'd like to donate.

— Lake-Noxen and Monroe township schools report their buildings are bulging at the seams.

40 Years Ago  
January 23, 1964

## LAKE RESIDENT MISSING 14 DAYS

— Harveys Lake has a mystery on its hands — the whereabouts of John Edwards, 51. Edwards was despondent after a fire gutted his business, Edward's Cafe. He has not been seen since he went for a walk not long after the fire.

— Fire of unidentified origin, demolished the four-level brick home of Thomas Metz, high on the hill above the old mill site in Carverton, yesterday.

— Items that could be purchased at Darling's grocery: fryers, 27¢ a pound; ground beef, three pounds for \$1.25 and Shurfine milk, seven cans, \$1.

30 Years Ago  
January 24, 1974

## OAK HILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION ENDS REGULAR MEETINGS

— The oak Hill Civic Association voted to cease the monthly meetings and instead to call special meetings only when needed.

— Many Dallas Borough residents are receiving summary criminal complaints for neglecting to file statements of their 10 percent earned income tax.

— Walter R. Hicks, one-time football coach at Kingston Township High School died in Eaton Hospital earlier this month.

20 Years Ago  
January 25, 1984

## HUDZIK APPOINTED TO BOARD

— Dan Hudzik, Sweet Valley, was recently sworn in as the newest member of the Lake-Lehman school board.

— Mrs. Lois Dodson, 59, of Outlet Road, Harveys Lake, died January 21 at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital

— Gino's Shoe Store and DeRemer's Laundry completed their first Christmas season in their new location, opposite First Eastern Bank on Route 309.

THE POST

TIMES•LEADER Community Newspaper Group

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

A: Only in The Post