

Fight for the Rock

Hot controversy over proposed Chickies Rock Park
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SUSQUEHANNA

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Flood possible, Marietta ready

Pennsylvania Civil Defense officials think there is a good possibility of a flood in Marietta as soon as warm weather arrives. If the river ice breaks up too quickly, then jams at Turkey Hill, the jam might form a dam which would raise the water to flood levels off Washington Boro, Columbia, and Marietta.

To prepare for that possibility, a meeting of concerned officials was called by Lancaster County Civil Defense last Saturday. Officials from Marietta who attended the meeting in-

cluded: Mayor Barney McDevitt, Civil Defense head Bill Breckline, Police Chief James Millar, Fire Chief Ken Geesey, and Mr. Robert Vanderslice. Representatives from Columbia, Washington Boro, County Civil Defense, the Red Cross, and the Safe Harbor power and water company also attended.

"It was a very worthwhile meeting," Mr. Breckline commented. "We're well set up for emergencies of any sort."

Mayor McDevitt said, "The plans are laid out perfectly."



Ice on the Susquehanna; there's a lot of it this year, and if it melts too fast, Marietta may be in for a flood. State Civil Defense officials are afraid that a sudden thaw

The officials agreed on division of responsibilities, locations for storing furniture, and the location of a mass care shelter. The Army Corps of Engineers

will mount a sandbagging operation, if local Civil Defense request it.

Starting today, the boro will begin a "Family Sur-

vey Pending Disaster." Fliers containing a list of questions will be handed out from door to door in the boro. Residents are urged to fill out these

questionnaires as soon as possible to help Civil Defense workers protect families and property if a flood occurs.

Facts about funerals: County funeral directors, led by Gerry Sheetz of Mount Joy, start teaching the public the facts of death

Funeral directors have a public relations problem. If you don't believe that statement, just turn on your TV.

This reporter saw two funeral directors portrayed on the tube last week. One was a frontier undertaker in a stovepipe hat. He smiled and rubbed his hands gleefully before the gunfight began.

The other fictional funeral director was a slick huckster who tried to overcharge a beautiful young widow by several thousand dollars. When she resisted, he said, "Don't you think your husband deserves the best?" (The hero, a tough private eye, saved the day by threatening to punch the funeral director in the mouth.)

Books attacking the funeral industry have become best-sellers. According to the authors, most funeral

directors are high-pressure salesmen who manipulate people into spending small fortunes for unnecessary, overpriced services.

Gerry Sheetz of Mount Joy, the newly elected president of the Lancaster County Funeral Directors' Association, wants to change that image. The Funeral Directors' Association has launched an educational campaign to help people understand their profession.

No complaints

Is there any truth to the TV stereotypes, or the best-selling "exposes" in the bookstores? The Federal Trade Commission launched an investigation of the funeral industry to see if new regulations were needed to prevent abuses. To their surprise, the federal investigators uncovered almost no complaints against the indus-

try. The investigation was dropped.

A local man told this reporter, "I thought all undertakers were crooks until my parents died. Now I have nothing but respect for the job they do. We told the guy what we could afford, and that was it. He took care of all the details, which we could never have done. We were all in a state of shock."

Since solid complaints against funeral directors are hard to find, what accounts for the ugly stereotypes?

Subconscious fear

Mr. Sheetz says, "There's no doubt about it. The human being has a strong subconscious fear of death. The tendency nowadays is to hide death, sweep it under the carpet, pretend it doesn't exist."

Perhaps that accounts for the prejudice against undertakers. They remind us of death, a subject we try not to think about. We respond with resentment or ridicule.

Gerry Sheetz says, "we should learn to view death as a natural part of life. As sure as you're born, you're going to die. Why pretend it's not going to happen?"

To make people more familiar with their profession, Funeral Directors'

Association members have begun lecturing at schools and service clubs. They also lead guided tours of their establishments.

The young adults' Sunday school class from Glossbrenner Church recently toured Gerald Sheetz's funeral home on Main Street in Mount Joy. They saw the whole building, including the preparation room, and learned exactly what a funeral director does.

The class asked a lot of questions about embalming, organ donation, cremation, and finances.

"Our primary purpose in embalming is for health and public safety," Gerry Sheetz says. "Water-borne bacteria like dysentery and typhoid could spread into water supplies if embalming were not done, he points out.

Funeral directors have a strong, unwritten code of professional ethics. Mr. Sheetz says, "We try not to lose respect for the dead human body," he says. "You have to keep respect for the human body, be it dead or alive."

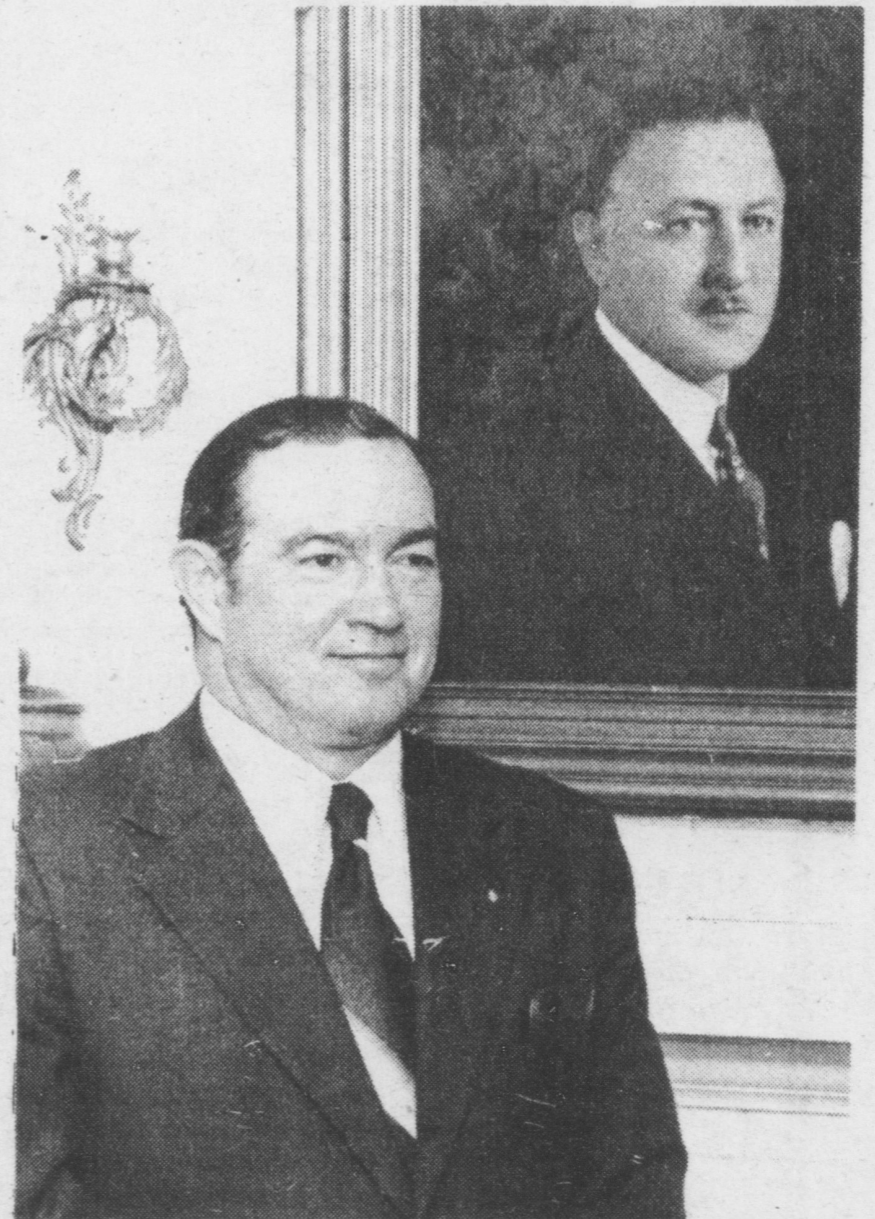
"I enjoy my work," he adds. His greatest satisfaction is helping bereaved families through a difficult time.

The way a funeral director's fee is computed has been changed by new state regulations. In the past,

only a few items, like the coffin, carried official price tags. To pay for his overhead, a funeral director would charge \$900 for a

\$100 coffin, and nothing for the use of his building, hearse, assistants, etcetera.

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Gerry Sheetz of Mount Joy, newly elected president of the Lancaster County Funeral Directors Association, stands beside a portrait of his father, Roy B. Sheetz, who ran a funeral business in the same building.