

## The Westfield Leader

— Established 1890 —

The Official Newspaper of the Town of Westfield and the County of Union

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## THE TIMES

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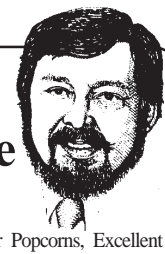
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## POPCORN™ Psycho: The Case of the Crazy Clone

By Michael S. Goldberger

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent



Like Dr. Manette in *A Tale of Two Cities*, and with no less a sense of earth-shattering importance, *Psycho* has been recalled to life. And similarly to the good doctor, it arrives a little worse for wear.

*Psycho* circa 1998 is at once old and new — old because it's practically a literal reprise of the original, new because of its experimental nature.

Director Gus Van Sant, feeling his oats following the successful *Good Will Hunting*, allows himself an indulgence heretofore untried and not without its controversy: his homage to Alfred Hitchcock is a scene-by-scene copy of the original, except in color.

It is as if Van Sant single-clicked Hitchcock's black and white 1960 classic, moved his cinematic cursor to file, and then clicked duplicate.

Van Sant's devotion to the original, though impeccably filmed, is ghoulish. But its actual horror quotient pales in comparison to the slasher stuff that claims the genre these days. Still, no modern horror purveyor can match that Bernard Herrmann score, re-created here by Danny Elfman.

Joseph Stefano's script, based on Robert Bloch's thriller once again tells the tale of Marion Crane, a real estate executive who makes an immoral choice and takes it on the lam with \$400,000 in company receipts.

Played with professionalism by Anne Heche, Marion's initial plan is to get her lover, Sam (Viggo Mortenson), out of debt and render him marriageable.

However, as she leaves Arizona, a state trooper shakes her up, the weather turns bad, and exhaustion sets in. So, it only makes sense that she stops at what has to be the spookiest, most out of the way hostelry in California.

At Bates Motel, she is welcomed by creepy Norman Bates, portrayed valiantly by Vince Vaughn.

But, Marion isn't reading between the lines when soulful Norm, a lonely boy, tells of his poor widowed Mom and how "a son is no replacement for a lover."

Ms. Heche's guilt-ridden embezzler has by this time decided to seek redemption and return the money on the morrow. But it's too late; she has committed the one sin for which a Hitchcockian character can never be absolved. She has dared to dream outside the lines.

Hence, it's curtains for Marion — shower curtains, to be exact. What follows when boyfriend Sam and sister Lila (Julianne Moore) try to locate the missing gal is dull and anticlimatic, although William H. Macy as private detective Milton Arbogast is winningly pesky.

The 1960 shocker was among the most sexually explicit films to date. The 1950s were ebbing in favor of the radical 1960s, and Hitchcock's film punctuated this with what was then cutting-edge terror. Yet, Van Sant's handsome curio piece rarely achieves anything above novelty value.

The experiment is not without its ground swell of media-induced intrigue. Advance publicity noted that the filmmaker timed scenes to match Hitch's tempo and meter. And, in a clever but pretentious conceit, the director emulates the master's trademark came by placing himself in a scene with a Hitchcock look-alike.

What about the shower scene? Actually, it's rather good insofar as homicidal terror is concerned, and still pretty frightening even though there's never been a horror sequence in the history of cinema that has afforded its audience this many decades to brace itself.

But there's an interesting phenomenon at work here, attesting to how the film has insinuated itself into our psyche. Americans of Baby Boomer age or older invariably claim three certainties in their lives: that they had, but frittered away, Mickey Mantle's rookie baseball card; that they were at Woodstock; and that the

blood they witnessed washing down the shower drain in *Psycho* was crimson red.

Most filmgoers are nonplused when reminded that the original film was not in color.

Van Sant's project has engendered a debate far more interesting than the film itself. Some cineastes have even decided to make it their life's work to comb the film for nuances, quirks, and any clues with which the director may have imbued his revivification.

Director Van Sant defends his project by arguing that if a classic play can be done over and over, why not a film? He further notes that the new *Psycho* affords a whole new generation an opportunity to see the film.

Is this a consideration our educational establishment has somehow failed to address? In any case, one must then assume that Van Sant wouldn't mind if someone in turn decided to replicate his colorized carbon copy. *Psycho* indeed.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Psycho*, rated R, is a Universal Pictures release directed by Gus Van Sant and stars Anne Heche, Vince Vaughn, and William H. Macy. Running time: 100 minutes.

## THE word

BY JO & JOHN JACOBSON

### THE STORY OF AMERICA

Amerigo Vespucci was an Italian navigator and ship chandler who, in letters to his patrons, the Medicis, claimed to have discovered the "Mundus Novus" (new world) in 1497.

Why was the Western Hemisphere named after Vespucci, when Christopher Columbus discovered it five years earlier in 1492? Join our voyage of discovery as we sail back in time to find the answer.

Vespucci's benefactor was a young German geographer, Martin Waldseemüller, who, in 1507, wrote his "Cosmos Graphiae Introductio." His atlas included a map of South America, which he named "America," "since Americus Vespucci (Latin name) discovered a fourth part of the world."

The word "American" was first used in 1578 to describe local dark-skinned natives. They were later called "Indians" because Columbus thought he had found a new route to India.

In 1697, clergyman Cotton Mather called the English colonists "Americans," while author Thomas Paine coined the term "United States of America." And there you have the story of America.

## Letters to the Editor

### Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Ed Deserves Vote of No Confidence

At the November 24 meeting of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education, Board President August Ruggiero stated that the board followed the professional advice of its attorney in labor matters.

As a matter of curiosity, I found out that since Dr. Carol B. Choye has been Superintendent, there have been at least 25 grievances filed against agents (administrators) of the Board of Education. Out of the 25 grievances, five were decided in favor of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association (SPFEA), 11 are still pending, and nine were sent to arbitration.

I was stunned to find out the results. Out of the nine arbitrations, eight were awarded to the Education Association and one was rejected on the basis that arbitration was not the proper venue for the issue.

Even conceding the one issue that was not decided by the arbitrator as an award for the school board, I find it incredible that impartial arbitrators are finding the school attorney's professional advice is wrong 89 percent of the time.

I'm not sure about other people, but I know that if a professional such as my attorney or physician was wrong 89 percent of the time, I would no longer be employing his/her professional services.

Of course, there are other possibilities. The advice from the attorney may be correct, but is being rejected either by the Board of Education, which then in-

structs its administrators to the fact. Or the administration is not heeding the attorney's advice, and the Board is not holding the administration responsible.

Whatever the situation is, the residents of Scotch Plains and Fanwood are the recipients of negative policies that have a direct effect on the education of their children.

A grievance is a contention that a superior has violated the agreed upon contract or an applicable law. For an outside arbitrator to find fault with school labor policies 89 percent of the time, no matter who advises it, shows that there are real problems within the Board of Education.

As a Fanwood resident, a professional staff member in the district and a concerned citizen who cares about the education of the children of our towns, I believe that it is time for the citizens of our towns to take a hard look at the situation and make the necessary changes, whether it be replacing school board members, the Superintendent of Schools or the school attorney.

We taxpayers can ill-afford for the Board to spend at least \$1,000 and sometimes as much as \$4,800, just to be told that they are wrong.

Maybe now it's not too hard to see why recently the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association, which works with the school board and the administration all the time, has given a unanimous vote of no confidence in both the superintendent and the board of education.

Ted Wurster  
Fanwood

### Thank You to All Who Helped Make 'Holiday Treasures' Benefit a Success

This is an open letter of appreciation to readers of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* who attended and supported the recent "Holiday Treasures" benefit for Children's Specialized Hospital.

On behalf of the nearly 200 members of the hospital's Auxiliary and four Twig groups (Westfield, Fanwood/Scotch Plains, Mountainside, and Summit/Short Hills), I would like to publicly say "thank you" to everyone who supported this new fundraiser, held in November at the Westfield National Guard Armory.

Because so many people supported this fundraiser as volunteers, corporate tree sponsors, designers, program book sponsors, entertainers from local musical groups and schools and attendees who purchased some of the hundreds of "Holiday Treasures," we expect to donate approximately \$60,000 to the hospital.

On behalf of the thousands of children who are helped at Children's Specialized Hospital and will be further helped by the proceeds of "Holiday Treasures," simply and sincerely, "thank you."

You still have an opportunity to add to the proceeds of this benefit by purchasing tickets for the Beanie Baby tree being raffled off by Bayberry Card Shop in

Mountainside. All proceeds from the Monday, December 21 raffle of the 200 Beanie Baby tree will be donated by the shop's owners, Harvey and Beatrice Alter, to "Holiday Treasures."

Maggie Cimei  
Westfield

### Sports Editor Honored For Excellent Coverage

I want to thank David Corbin for all the coverage he gave us in *The Westfield Leader* both before the Westfield Athletic Hall of Fame Dinner and the event itself. The community enjoys this induction dinner, which we do every two years.

Our attendance at this year's Hall of Fame event was 255. We will keep you posted on our future plans.

Your attendance at and pictures of the luncheon were wonderful.

The inductees get to know one another at that affair and get to see the trustees, the high school building, and the Hall of Fame wall outside the Athletic Director's office.

Lee M. Hale, President  
Westfield Athletic Hall of Fame

## Will Deregulated Electric, Gas Industry Create More Headaches Than Savings?

This month, the State Legislature is expected to approve a bill which will deregulate the gas and electric industry in New Jersey. Garden State consumers currently pay rates that are 50 percent more than the national average. The legislation, if signed as expected by the Governor, would take effect July 1.

Like most consumers, we remain skeptical until we actually see lower electric bills and not simply additional products or services like caller identification, return call or call waiting, as offered by the telephone company. When this occurred, we wound up spending money for services that we were able to do without all these years. Will the deregulation of electricity create a similar system? PSE&G, for instance, is already offering service contracts for furnaces and major appliances to customers outside of its service area.

The new process will resemble the deregulation of long-distance telephone call providers. Consumers will have a choice of where their electricity is purchased. However, the billing will still come from the regional supplier, Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G). Within that bill will be services from the new electricity provider, the same as AT&T or MCI long-distance bills are included within Bell Atlantic billing statements.

A 10 percent reduction in bills, as mandated in the legislation, would take effect on July 1. While a 10 percent cut is nothing to sneeze about, it really does not help much in cutting expenses for the average household. That's where the system of "aggregation" — both government and private — comes into play.

Since individual persons have little buying power themselves when it comes to gaining the best price on electricity, the legislation allows for towns, school boards, counties, etc., to bid out contracts for electricity and natural gas. Groups such as the state Chamber of Commerce, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, could also get favorable prices for their membership.

Electricity deregulation was put into motion in 1992 upon the passage by Congress of the Energy Policy Act. The Act left the decision about the form of deregulation and when to make it law in the hands of state legislatures. As of this year, nine states (including Massachusetts, New Hampshire, California and Rhode Island) have passed deregulation laws. New York and Pennsylvania are also deregulated.

Like many states, New Jersey only plans to deregulate

the sale of power — not the transmission and distribution of electricity. Electricity is sold by kilowatt hour. For instance, 10 100-watt light bulbs used for one hour equal one kilowatt-hour of electricity.

The New Jersey legislation, according to the Legislature, is aimed at opening the state's utility system up to competition, which in turn "will promote efficiency, reduce regulatory delay, and foster productivity and innovation." The bill is aimed at ending the monopoly in order to allow New Jersey consumers access to a competitive market.

If aggregation is put into play, it will be something totally different for towns to be involved in. Aggregation enables towns and organizations to purchase electricity at bulk prices in an effort to lower the cost. One area which went to the new system just last year was Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

In an effort to lower electricity prices for a portion of Cape Cod, 15 towns in Barnstable County and six communities from Dukes County on Martha's Vineyard, along with their respective county governments, signed an inter-municipal agreement to create the Cape Cod Compact late last year. The Compact then sought bids from utilities for 184,000 customers included in the Compact. It is expected to be a while, however, before any significant savings are generated through the plan.

New Jersey Ratepayer Advocate Blossom Peretz has sought an "opt out" approach to municipal aggregation. Under this option, an aggregation agreement automatically includes all homes and businesses which either do not choose to remain with their old utility or seek a new provider on their own.

A proposal by New Jersey's Board of Public Utilities (BPU) would require towns to get residents and businesses to sign up for an aggregation deal like the Cape Cod Compact before soliciting bids from utilities. Ratepayer Peretz has opposed this plan, saying it would force governments to spend significant dollars on marketing for such a program.

We believe that a deregulated market is an interesting concept. However, we are not sure if having government involved is the best plan. Since Town Hall is not involved in our telephone bills, is it wise for them to make deals for our electricity bills? What if the system creates even more annoying nightly calls from telemarketers trying to get us to switch electricity suppliers?

There are positives and negatives with change. It will be interesting to see if a deregulated market creates more headaches than savings.

## Letters to the Editor

### Fanwood Resident Reflects Upon Importance of the Battle of Bulge

I've got a bone to pick with the "lifestyle" editors and television newsmagazine producers who are tempted to dredge up their annual feature stories on holiday feasting, New Year's resolutions and the ever-expanding American waistline. Please, do me a favor and don't refer to the latest diet craze or exercise regimen as a new weapon in "The Battle of the Bulge."

Sure, 'tis the season to eat, drink and be merry and it's a real drag to be politically correct while reaching for another piece of pie. But it's also the anniversary of the largest pitched battle of World War II, a battle that cost the lives of nearly 20,000 American soldiers.

The Battle of the Bulge, also known as the Ardennes Campaign, began suddenly on December 16, 1944, and ended unceremoniously on January 25, 1945.

For those unfamiliar with the campaign, perhaps British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's remarks to Parliament will serve to put the battle into the proper historical perspective: "This is undoubtedly the greatest battle of the war and will, I believe, be regarded as an ever-famous American victory."

It was certainly bad enough that more than a half-million Americans involved in that protracted battle missed the holiday fare that season. But, after all, there was a war on. Servicemen and women were doing their duty through thick and thin. Besides, on the European front it looked to the Americans like the end was near for Hitler and Nazi Germany. The troops would be coming home soon.

The hope of a quick end to the war was shattered in mid-December, 1944 when three German armies suddenly counter-attacked in Belgium and Luxembourg.

For the next six weeks the American forces fought to contain the "bulge" in their front lines and eventually push the Germans back toward the Rhine.

The few remaining survivors of "The Bulge" will never forget those frigid weeks. Soldiers slept standing up, leaning on one another to keep from freezing to death. Those who slept on the ground huddled together in groups for warmth. The skies were overcast for weeks. Fog,

snow and freezing kept U.S. planes Tom coming to the aid of the ground troops.

The lifting of the siege of Bastogne, Belgium, where American General McAuliffe said "Nuts!" to the German demand for kits surrender, is perhaps the best known episode of the "Battle of the Bulge." It marked the turning of the tide for the hundreds of thousands of American soldiers who struggled tenaciously in the snow 54 years ago.

Their struggle was not in vain. Several months later, Hitler and Mussolini were dead and the Axis powers were defeated.

But victory had its price. Among the dead in the Ardennes Forest, the setting of the Battle of the Bulge, was a young man from Brooklyn by the name of Tom Plante.

I never met my uncle, but I'm told I would have liked him. I think about him at this time of year — and all the others left behind because of that terrible war.

Sad as that may be, that's what I'd prefer to think of when I read or hear about "The Battle of the Bulge" and pray for peace.

Tom Plante  
Fanwood

### Santa Claus Thanks Scotch Plains For Welcome at Holiday Celebration

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Scotch Plains for the incredible reception I received at the holiday celebration on December 6.

To see all the smiling faces of the children and their parents was a tremendously exciting experience for me. It was so uplifting, I could have flown back home to the North Pole without Rudolph and company!

I also want to thank Mayor Joan Papan, the folks from the Recreation Department and Fire Department, as well as all the volunteers from the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association for helping make my visit a happy one.

A special thanks goes out to Mrs. Claus and the elves for helping with

### Township Banners Need to Reflect a More 'Historical' Image

I would ask that the authorities in Scotch Plains take a leaf from Fanwood, Westfield and Plainfield regarding the types of banners flying from their utility poles.

Westfield says "Welcome Home To Westfield" on a field of deep green. Fanwood has the most creative and colorful, namely, patterns and colors that change with the seasons. Finally, Plainfield uses a banner with a bright yellow field with poinsettias and no message.

What do those who walk or drive through Scotch Plains see on our utility poles? Banners proclaiming "Enjoy That Home Towne Feeling," a totally empty and meaningless phrase.

I would urge that these Scotch Plains banners be scrapped and replaced with something of class that is more in keeping with our town's historic image.

Also, the "Towne Centre" signs, while "okay," should have the totally inappropriate advertising panels removed from what should be a community welcome.

Alan R. Howe  
Scotch Plains

everything.

I need everyone's help to make this a joyous holiday season for all. Whether it is helping out the victims of the hurricane in Central America or helping out those less fortunate in your community, please take some time during this season to do whatever is possible to help out.

Again, I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Happy Hanukkah, too!

By the way, if you are leaving out milk and cookies for me on Christmas Eve, make it 1 percent milk — I've put on some weight since last Christmas.

Santa Claus  
North Pole

## Letters to the Editor

### Thank You For Support In Poinsettia Benefit

The Westfield High School Ice Hockey Association wants to thank the local merchants and residents who supported our Annual Poinsettia Sale Fundraiser. All the proceeds directly benefit the self-funded Westfield High School Ice Hockey team and help to keep them skating.

This successful annual fundraiser has grown, year after year, through the generous support of the contributors and word-of-mouth advertising, and has enabled the team to continue its efforts.

Your enthusiasm and support mean a tremendous amount to the students who participate on the team. Please keep them in mind for next year's orders.

Again, thanks for your support! From all the members of the Westfield High School Ice Hockey Association — Happy Holidays!

Jane Fitter-Schoenfeld  
Noreen Lund  
Co-Chairwomen and  
Westfield High School  
Ice Hockey Association Members

