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Tele: (908) 232-4407 • E-mail: press@goleader.com • Web: www.goleader.com • Fax: (908) 232-0473

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<p>Michelle H. LePoidevin <small>AAE and EDUCATION</small></p> <p>Suzette F. Stalker <small>COMMUNITY</small></p> <p>Jennifer Pinto <small>PROFESSIONAL STAFF</small></p> <p>Lauren S. Pass <small>PROFESSIONAL STAFF</small></p>	<p>Horace R. Corbin <small>PUBLISHER</small></p> <p>David B. Corbin <small>ASSISTANT PUBLISHER & SPORTS</small></p> <p>Karen M. Hinds <small>OFFICE MANAGER</small></p>	<p>Fred K. Lecomte <small>SALES DIRECTOR</small></p> <p>Michael L. Bartiromo <small>MARKETING & PRODUCTION</small></p> <p>Robert P. Connelly <small>CLASSIFIEDS & LEGALS</small></p>
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GUEST COLUMN

A Constitutional Convention, Who Wins? Loses?

By Garland "Bud" Boothe
Former Mayor of Westfield

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Diction Deception

Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions - only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly - good guess. If you get two - well-read individual. If you get three - word expert. If you get all four - You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.

Answers to last week's arcane words.

1. Inceration - Covering with wax
2. Meconic - Pertaining to or derived from the poppy
3. Hoyden - A bold, boisterous girl; a tomboy
4. Farraginous - Mixed or jumbled

DIACOPE

1. Unity; cooperation
2. A crown worn as a sign of royalty
3. A deep cut or a gash
4. A cavern or large cave

VADIMONY

1. Bail
2. Pertaining to well water
3. Selfish regard for oneself
4. Harmony; as one

PILLION

1. An extra seat behind the driver's saddle on a motorcycle
2. One who has fine, soft hair
3. A butterfly
4. A soft-shelled river tortoise

CITIGRADA

1. Having the shape of a funnel
2. A family of spiders which catch their prey by running swiftly
3. A species of large, wild sheep
4. A species of large, tailless rodents

Answers will appear in next week's issue.

Friends of the Library Thank Residents for Supporting Book Sale

The Friends of the Westfield Memorial Library would like to express our gratitude to all the people who supported our record breaking annual book sale. We would like to thank those who backed the sale by donating books, those who purchased books and especially those who gave time and labor before and during the sale. Once again, the sale was a huge success and all of the profits will be donated to the library so that all Westfield residents will benefit from your generosity.

We would also like to thank all the residents who have joined the "Friends of the Westfield Memorial Library". We have had a wonderful response from the town as we celebrate our 30th Anniversary. Memberships help to pay for various programs offered at the library, such as the Symphony program held recently and also children's programs.

Sadie Schoss
Book Sale Chairperson
Linda Kolterjahn
Membership Chairperson

Clean Communities and Recycling Grant Act Should Be Passed

Our State Legislature is currently examining legislation, which deserves to pass. Assembly Bill Number 2110 and Senate Bill Number 1373 cover the "Clean Communities and Recycling Grant Act". Under this act, the Clean Communities Program will be revived. The loss of the program this year has caused many communities to cancel activities, which, for years, were largely funded by the program.

The Recycling Grant Program was a part of the Recycling Act, which dates back to the 1980's. It established recycling goals for the state and helped fund the costs each municipality incurred in its recycling efforts. Communities recycling a greater percentage of their solid waste received a proportionally larger grant. In 1996 funding for the grant program was lost, even though the recycling law remains in effect and the state is asking our towns to give more effort to recycling. Under the Act, the Recycling Act Program will be revived. It is noteworthy that the sponsors and co-sponsors of the bills include members of both parties. Both the Clean Communities and Recycling Grants are worthy programs. They deserve strong support.

Robert H. Sommerich
Fanwood

Patriotic Sentiment Seen on Memorial Day Should Be Reflected Throughout the Year

It seems there was a great deal more sentiment; more snap and roll in the snare drums this year at the Memorial Day parades. Our flag gleamed brighter in the morning sun, it was held a little higher, it waved crisper in the breeze. Heads were more lofted, and the crowds were larger. It's been a while since that tingle inside oneself was stirred by the music, the speeches, the musket salutes all in the memory of the patriots who gave us the freedoms we have today.

On the faces of the veterans, the marchers and the spectators, one could see the surge of pride. All sensed the resolve that we have to keep America strong. There was no hiding of expression or sentiment by those present in their support for liberty's stand. The Westfield Methodist Church bell rang nine times, then 11; followed by a rolling toll - the first time in memory that the crowd applauded the ringing of the bell, recounted the Town Bell Ringer.

As one watched the parades streaming with marchers, including police officers, firefighters, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, school children, the bands, many groups from society and our community leaders, we were reminded that the emotion aroused by this celebration should not be just a once a year affair.

The pride and patriotic fervor we witness each Memorial Day is something we should strive for every day. Although visible and vibrant in the wake of September 11, such reverence often fades as holiday observances give way to more lighthearted summer fare.

Let us not forget, however, that wars against tyranny did not end in just a day. American men and women did not give their lives in just a day. Our victories were not won in just a day. We should remember and acknowledge the sacrifices made on our behalf - by generations living and deceased - on more than just a day.

Voter Apathy Needs to be Reversed Now, With Key Races to be Decided in November

There's a Primary Election in New Jersey on Tuesday, June 4, and the polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Few people seem aware of this, and voter turnout promises to be light. This is not to say, however, that there's not an enormous amount at stake in the General Election in November, there is.

Control of the state and federal legislature will be up for grabs then and it promises to be a close battle. Several important municipal government races in Westfield, Fanwood and Scotch Plains will be decided in November as well.

Except for selection of the Republican United States Senate candidate, there's very little at stake in the Primary next week for this region, as there are few contested races in the respective parties. New Jersey has a closed Primary system and only Republicans or Democrats can vote in their respective primaries.

The Republican Party has a statewide contest to see who will challenge United States Senator Robert Torricelli. For this reason, it's significant for Republicans to show up and vote. The Republican Primary race for United States Senate in New Jersey boils down to the choice of Douglas Forrester of West Windsor, Diane Allen of Edgewater Park and John Matheussen of Turnersville.

Mr. Forrester seems to be gaining in GOP party support over Ms. Allen, although Ms. Allen reportedly polls well against Mr. Torrecilli. Mr. Matheussen is third in the polls for gaining the Primary nod. At this early stage, most doubt the meaning of polls for the General Election. What seems to count in the Primary is organizational support and money to proceed with the campaign. Mr. Forrester has this edge and is gaining over the other Republicans. He picked up most of the organizational support previously given to Jim Treffinger, who recently pulled out of the race.

Assemblyman Thomas Kean, Jr. of Westfield recently came out in support of Mr. Forrester. "Doug Forrester is my choice to be our Republican nominee for the U.S. Senate because he is going to

fight to lower taxes, protect our families and save and strengthen Social Security. He is a man of character and integrity, and will work hard for New Jersey. I am proud to offer my full support to his campaign, and will work hard between now and November to help him retire Bob Torricelli," said Assemblyman Kean.

Congressman Mike Ferguson, R-Warren Township, is seeking re-election to his second term in our district this November. In 2000, Mr. Ferguson defeated former Fanwood Mayor Maryanne Connelly by a 52 to 46 percent margin.

The redistricting of the Seventh Congressional District last year seems to have made the seat safer for Congressman Ferguson's re-election. However, some Democrats disagree in that the redistricting brings 40 percent new voters into the district. These new voters, however, have traditionally leaned Republican in past elections.

The Democratic challenger for Congressman Ferguson's seat is Tim Carden. He is uncontested in the Democratic Primary next week. Mr. Carden, having grown up in Peapack, just opened his campaign office on Elmer Street in Westfield and promises to wage a vigorous campaign to unseat Congressman Ferguson.

Congressman Ferguson has been a strong supporter of President Bush, and he says that the President will be visiting our Seventh Congressional District later this year.

To us, it certainly seems the time to reverse the decline in voter turnout. The League of Women Voters has researched and published many good reasons to reverse voter apathy. Their website, www.lwv.org presents this information.

One theme that struck us in reviewing the voter apathy issue was a recurring call for civics education of our youth. In the past, civics education was commonplace in our public education system. Apparently, that is not the case today. We believe this should be changed. It will take several years for the education of our youth to have an impact on voter turnout. But, we must start sometime.

Jerseyans you and me, may have an opportunity to do something "constitutional" one of these days about a favorite gripe high property taxes.

High property taxes, "skyrocketing" have been the favorite adjective, have been the source of complaints for decades. The state legislature for, pick your reason, has never done anything sweeping about changing them: only a few "relief" measures such as rebates you have to apply for and wait for.

A movement is underway to have a convention called to propose an amendment to the New Jersey Constitution that will "reform" real property taxation. I have followed tax issues, and complaints, for decades, and recently attended a forum on this convention idea. No specific idea or solution is on the table, but lots have been and more will be put forth. The concept for the convention is that any "real property tax reform" will be "revenue neutral". And what, pray tell, does that mean?

Well, right now four governmental agencies collect taxes to run their respective operations in New Jersey: the municipality, the county and the school system. The municipality collects and distributes the property tax. The state does not now have a tax on real estate, but does collect personal and corporate income taxes and the sales tax, plus some other odds and ends. All these total say, "5x" each year.

"Revenue neutral" means the total exacted of thee and me and eight million others by all taxing entities will be the same. You don't need a PhD in math to figure out that if things are reconfigured so that property taxes go down, other things have to go up for "5x" to remain the same.

Here is the rub: as proponents of the tax convention candidly admit, there will be real winners and real losers in any reform. Will you come out ahead or behind if your property taxes (for roads and schools and parks, etc) go down but income and/or sales taxes go up?

New Jersey governments rely far more on property taxes, by a factor of two or more, than every other state. We also have far more governmental units than most. We have more school districts than Texas. We have many police departments rather than as part of a county sheriff system such as at many other places. We have many small municipalities such as Fanwood, Garwood and Mountainside. Westfield with a population of 29,000 is about number 30 in size out of the 566 municipalities in the state.

Is there any relationship? Conversely, would you rather have your schools and street repairs directed by local or county officials? There are relationships to be drawn but the convention is not supposed to go into these or other issues on the cost and spending side.

The delegates at any such convention would have to look at the consequences of such changes in that quest for revenue neutrality. They could be profound. Say, all real estate taxes are abolished and the local - county - school costs are paid 100

Letters to the Editor

Police Officers Should Practice Caution on Rahway Avenue

As a four-year resident of Rahway Avenue, my husband and I are very pleased with the measures being taken by the town to try and calm the traffic along the road on which we live and along which our children walk to school.

Although the amount of traffic that backs up during before and after school hours seems great now, we are confident that it will become as common place and expected as trying to negotiate the South Avenue circle at 6 p.m. Something that we and many of our neighbors find troubling, however, is the speed at which some Westfield Police cruisers travel down Rahway Avenue when responding to a traffic emergency; more than likely, an emergency that has taken place at the southern terminus of Rahway Avenue and Lamberts Mill Road.

Although lights and sirens are being used, cars traveling at speeds well over 50 miles per hour can do little or nothing to avoid an unexpected hazard. Countless times we have witnessed cruisers literally fly down our street past blind intersections like Dorian Road and

Shackamaxon Drive and through limited sight distance areas like the hill at Willow Grove Road. Very often, police cars are traveling at such a rate of speed that we see the blue and white streak fly by seconds before we hear any trace of a siren. How safe can this practice be? I understand the importance of arriving at the scene of an accident to assure the safety of those involved, but at what cost? A collision took place last fall at Shackamaxon Drive when an out-of-area driver attempted to cross Rahway Avenue (known by local drivers as something that should be avoided at all costs). That car was struck by a police cruiser speeding to the scene of another accident; as a result there were two locations where assistance was needed. Care and common sense should be exercised by all drivers at all times, that we all know; but extra care should be shown by our local police officers. The potential for additional damage is so much greater when police cars travel at such fast speeds; why compound the suffering by adding to an already unfortunate situation. Mr. Policeman, please slow down.

Kathy Steinfeld
Westfield

Mountainside School Budget Defeat has Benefited the Borough

Positive outcomes have resulted with the defeat of the Mountainside School Budget. (1) Those of who attended the two meetings at Borough Hall or watched the proceedings on television had a great educational experience. (2) After much discussion and deliberation the budget was cut by \$486,875. (3) For all homeowners this has realized an average tax cut of \$160. (4) All of this accomplished and in no way harming the education of the children of Mountainside. (5) An independent auditor will audit board books.

I appreciate the time, effort and energy expended to resolve these important issues. The entire community has benefited.

Mary L. Root
Mountainside

Erratum

In the EZ Pass article of May 16, the following corrections are noted:

1. The quote attributed to Mr. Oatman should instead be attributed to Mr. LaPolla, and it should read "The Governor issued a directive to the Commissioner of Transportation to come up with recommendations to resolve (matters) in 120 days by June."
2. Mr. Ed Oatman is Chief of Staff for Assemblywoman Linda Stender, not spokesperson, as written.

Resident Feels Leader/Times Cartoon Was In Poor Taste

I am writing in response to the editorial cartoon in your paper regarding the proposed ordinance against underage drinking in Scotch Plains. To say I thought it was in poor taste is putting it mildly.

There will always be two sides to an issue. Some will agree and some will disagree. As a newspaper, you have the right to share your opinion as well. But to associate the issue of underage drinking with a historically violent and abhorrent event is unprofessional on your part. There was nothing humorous about the Holocaust nor is there anything humorous about the potential problems associated with underage drinking.

It seems that you feel the community has deep seeded fears about what the police "might" do. And yet, when there is a serious problem... a fight, a car accident, a choking child, a heart attack the first line of defense most commonly thought of is to contact the police. They are seen as the protectors, the people who can get the job done, the very people we rely on. Why would anyone assume the police would be less professional in the way they handle entering a home in the case of an underage drinking party?

My understanding of the ordinance being proposed is that it does not allow the police to have any additional "power". It is designed to be a deterrent to underage drinking. It assigns a consequence to the underage drinkers to make them think twice about repeating the behavior in the future. It is designed to help insure the safety of the youth in this community. The passage of the

ordinance speaks volumes to kids. I believe it sends a clear message to the youth of Scotch Plains that their community is concerned about their safety and is committed to do what it can to help insure that safety.

The Municipal Alliance has provided the community with factual information on the proposed ordinance. Your paper has the opportunity to help get that factual information out to the community. I suggest it would be a better use of editorial space for you to do that and leave emotion out of it.

Anne Wischusen
Scotch Plains

