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POPCORN™
Beloved:
Emancipation Proclamation

By Michael S. Goldberger

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

THE word
SLEUTHS
BY
JO & JOHN JACOBSON

Hopefully 'Undecided' Voters Will Opt To Go to Polls Tuesday for Local Races

This Tuesday is an important day for Americans as we go to the election polls to choose the candidates who we believe will best represent us. The right to vote should not be taken lightly. In the weeks leading up to this election, this newspaper has been taking the "pulse" of the voting electorate. With the high number of people who said they are undecided on who to vote for, there is a concern that these people won't vote. That would be extremely unfortunate, considering the importance of this year's races.

As part of our annual pre-election issue, this week's edition includes stories and biographies of candidates in the four communities we cover, as well as a story summarizing races in surrounding suburban towns here in Union County. We have also included articles on the new computerized election machines being unveiled this year in Westfield, Fanwood, Mountainside and Kenilworth, as well as a story on the public questions on the ballot this year.

This fall, Westfield is witnessing a three-way battle for Mayor, as well as races in all of the town's four wards. Democrats, who won the Mayor's race and two seats on the council in 1996, are hoping to pick up seats in the first and second wards this year. Republicans hold a 6-3 edge on the governing body. Neighboring Mountainside is witnessing a race this

year, as Democrats try to gain seats on the six-member, currently all-Republican Borough Council for the first time in the community's history. Democrats are also trying to make a dent in Scotch Plains, where Republicans have a 5-0 majority.

Republicans are hoping to make headway in Fanwood, where Democrats have a 4-3 edge on the governing body. The party's biggest challenge, though, is in the race for seats on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Republicans have been swept in Freeholder races the last three years, resulting in a switch from a 5-4 GOP majority to the current 9-0 majority for the Democrats.

Also of interest as President Bill Clinton marks the mid-term of his second term, is the Seventh Congressional District race between three-term Republican incumbent Bob Franks of Berkeley Heights and challenger Maryanne S. Connelly, the Democratic Mayor of Fanwood.

For the past few years, this newspaper has not made political endorsements. We believe the only real endorsement is that of the voters. So, in this issue, we have done our best to give our readership an understanding of who is running for what position and where they stand on the issues.

We urge all to vote so that their voices are heard this election day.

Letters to the Editor

Westfield Residents Call School Sign In Front of Home A 'Monstrosity'

We are writing this letter as a cautionary tale to the residents of Westfield. In late August, we returned home from vacation to find an enormous, flashing school sign topped with a huge solar panel erected in front of our house. We were never consulted or notified

about either the planning, placement, type or size of the sign to be erected. This monstrosity just appeared one day on our front lawn. It greatly impacts on both the aesthetics and property value of our home.

This is now not the house we were attracted to and purchased.

However, the real shame of the situation is that the sign does not do what it is supposed to do. It is positioned too close to the intersection to be effective. Cars and trucks travel down Mountain Avenue too fast and end up seeing the sign too late.

Special Program Could Halt Drunk Driving

Drinking and driving has become a large problem in our society. Many feel that they can drive drunk and nothing will happen to them. They think that drinking doesn't affect their driving. This is wrong — everyone is affected by alcohol.

There are many programs to discourage people from drinking and driving. But, unfortunately, over 20 percent of all traffic accidents are caused by drunk drivers. This problem is all around us.

I know many of my peers in Westfield drive home drunk every weekend and don't think twice about it. Even more frightening to think about is how many of their friends get in the car with them.

Having a safe ride program available to people could be a big help. The safe ride program provides a sober ride home and it might save someone's life. If more people called for a safe ride, the accidents on the road would be reduced greatly.

The safe ride program is not only the safest way for a drunk person to get home, but it also could save the life of an innocent person on the road. I feel that many parents could do a great deal for this program and should try to get involved with it. If parents and their children work together to plan a safe ride program, it could be a big success.

In my opinion, a safe ride program would be a great addition to the Westfield community, and I urge people to consider it.

We find it very interesting that in a town such as Westfield that prides itself on its image — we have strict guidelines regarding business signs, we are considering limits on the placement of newspaper boxes on corners, we now have an exterior maintenance code — a huge sign can be dropped on a taxpayers front lawn without any warning.

Would the mayor or any of the council members like and accept a sign like this suddenly dropped in front of their houses? We don't think so! Considering the high property taxes we pay, we believe we deserve better treatment. We believe we are now entitled to a property tax decrease due to the devaluation of our property.

On October 16, in a local newspaper, one of the mayoral candidates said, "One of the most important functions of town government is to provide clear, accurate and timely communications between the town and the residents of the community. Leadership is not just telling people things. Listening is also a key ingredient to successful leadership."

We believe there are alternative sites for the placement of the sign that would also make it more effective. Is anybody listening?

Meghan Flynn
Westfield

Phyllis and William Brown
Westfield

Sharing Talents and Skills Volunteers Praised for Generosity, Dedication

This month, the Westfield Public Schools are commemorating the volunteers who make our Sharing Talents and Skills (STS) program possible.

This program, in its 21st year in the district, brings the careers, experiences, talents and travels of volunteers into the classroom. Every week of the school year, you can find eager adults sharing their knowledge with students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Most of our volunteers are parents in the district, who volunteer in the beginning of the school year. Through a directory sent to all our teachers, the speaker presentations are made available district-wide. Since mid-September, there have been 31 classroom presentations coordinated through STS.

More than 70 new speakers have volunteered and a new directory which will list their names and talents will be available for the teachers in the district in the next few weeks.

As a result of generous volunteers who give up their time from the office or home to speak to our students, this program has become a model for other districts. In the

last two weeks, I received a phone call from a district in Union County and one in Minnesota for information about how to get an STS program started in their schools.

We were also a model for one introduced by the Union County Superintendent of Schools in conjunction with the Union County Chamber of Commerce.

Thanks again to all our volunteers for making this program possible.

For those who have not yet volunteered but would like to do so, it's not too late.

Please call the STS office at (908) 789-4463.

Lorrie Korecky
Coordinator, STS
Westfield Public Schools

Former Local Residents Still Love Scotch Plains

My husband, daughter and I decided to pay a visit to Scotch Plains after an absence of 18 months.

We moved to Scotch Plains as a bride and groom after George completed his tour of duty (35 missions over Germany) with the 8th Air Force as a pilot of a B-17 Bomber during World War II.

Our daughter completed her elementary and high school years in Scotch Plains and also purchased a home in "our" town after she graduated college and was out in the working world.

In April, we all decided to move to North Carolina, which also happens to be a beautiful state. When one retires, sometimes it's time to move on and we were fortunate that our daughter elected to leave her job to join us in the Tar Heel State where she again found excellent employment — thanks to her formative years in Scotch Plains.

The three of us visited Scotch Plains last week and as we drove down Park Avenue, I realized all over again, what a pretty little town Scotch Plains is.

I think the gazebo is a really nice addition to the center of town. We didn't get a chance to see it, but I understand there is a "bust" of Charlie Meyer near the fire house in back of the Municipal Building.

I'm sorry I missed that, because I knew Charlie when I was employed by the township as an assistant township clerk with Helen Reidy back in the middle 1950s. Ahh, what wonderful memories. In fact, I still subscribe to *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood*.

We may have moved out of state, but Scotch Plains still has a special place in our hearts. There is one thing we don't miss, and that is snow shoveling and grass cutting. Everything here is natural.

Pearl L. Battschinger
Sanford, North Carolina

Finally, October 31 is a Saturday this year!

The food store reminds us, "Don't forget. Buy extra Halloween candy, you'll have more trick or treaters this year."

Since it's dad's day off, he can take the kids block by block and get first dibs on the Milky Ways. And, he can get an earlier start.

Mom can stay at home to answer the door with goodies for the little ghosts and goblins instead of being out with her own.

If mom works, she doesn't need to beg the boss to get out early. And, most friends and neighbors with Halloween spirit who don't have children won't be making the mad dash home at rush hour to catch the few remaining stragglers who actually do go door-to-door much past dark.

But wait, *The Times* reported, "Township Officials Say Celebrate Halloween on Friday."

I didn't realize that Scotch Plains had a township official who held the position of "The Grinch Who Stole Halloween!"

Cathy Smith
Scotch Plains

Celebrate Halloween Saturday, Not Friday

Like her conscience-tortured Holocaust analogy in *Sophie's Choice*, the scarred soul harbors a dark, deep secret. Yet she protects a small and carefully nurtured wish, determined to make a life for herself and her children. But, the question is agonizingly pondered throughout the film: Can one look to the future with any kind of hope when the horrid past seems so irreconcilable?

The well-traveled road in front of Sethe's house is ripe with life's passing pageant and full of possibilities, good and bad. And one day it brings a face from home — one that's been wandering the roads for 18 years.

It's Paul D., a garrulous and kindly man magnificently played by Danny Glover. He is Sethe's brother-in-law. And his timely arrival forces Sethe to face the facts: that the man she married in a slave ceremony back on the plantation is probably lost to the ages, never to be reunited with wife and children. This realization makes the visitor a proper suitor.

Paul D. is warned that Sethe's house is haunted, but remains undaunted in his romantic zeal. The affair that ensues is the most sensitive and understanding take on love among the middle-aged set since Streep and Eastwood paired off in *The Bridges of Madison County*.

But of course, there are the usual, as well as unusual, problems. Among the more expected issues, Sethe's teen-aged daughter, Denver (nicely exacted by Kim-

berly Elise), is jealous of the attentions Paul D. is diverting away from her.

But just when Glover's character seems to be assuaging daughter dear, the resident ghost starts making known its objections to the romantic interloper.

It is Denver's contention that the angry spirit is her sister who died in infancy.

It's at this point that the story really turns up the weird quotient. Enter stage left, Beloved (wonderfully realized by Thandie Newton).

Emerging from a nearby lake as if rising up from the primordial ooze, the beautiful young woman is dressed in black and covered with bugs. Walking like it's a completely new experience, she is a study in precariousness. The title character babbles, grunts, and snorts like a dyspeptic baby (but wait, the full litany of bad health habits is yet to come). Somehow, she makes her way to the house.

Seth and Denver are mysteriously drawn to this presence and almost immediately accept her as their own. Paul D. is confounded by the curious turn of events.

Acting as the writer's spiritual variation on the deus ex machina, Beloved's visit brings profound and psychological baggage to the fore, setting several of the tale's major and minor impetuses in motion.

Nothing is told simply or simply told in Mr. Demme's filmic translation of Toni Morrison's deeply poetic saga.

If there's an oblique way to purvey a concept, then that's how it's done. And while this heavy shadowing may serve to symbolically echo the ambiguity confused former slaves are faced with in post-abolition America, a more direct telling may have made this story more palpable for the Peorians in us all. In this form, *Beloved* earns our respect, but not necessarily our love.

Perhaps the movie studio could improve its numbers by offering a free master's degree in literature via correspondence course for every ticket sold to *Beloved*. Seeing this challenging motion picture would be an apt first assignment.

Beloved, rated R, is a Touchstone Pictures release directed by Jonathan Demme and stars Oprah Winfrey, Danny Glover and Thandie Newton. Running time: 172 minutes.

More Letters On Page A-7

Challenge Halloween Saturday, Not Friday

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Letters to the Editor

Television Violence Can Impact Moral Development of Children

The average American child will watch 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television before finishing elementary school. These numerous hours of violence on television can contribute to increased aggressiveness in children.

For most children, television life and real life are the same. All children are visual learners, therefore, they take in both positive and negative aspects of television shows. At a young age, children can't fully comprehend the differences between right and wrong, so many will model the violent actions of characters on a show because they see it as being accepted.

Programs that portray violence very realistically and frequently with no consequences are the ones that children are more likely to imitate. Soon, children will gradually learn to accept violence as a way of solving their problems.

A national survey of elementary school teachers found that many children seemed to be confused about the difference between fantasy and reality, and they felt it was okay to use physical violence because the turtles use it on the cartoon "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles."

Another survey conducted by Leonard Eron, who chairs the APA Commission on Violence and Youth and spent 36 years researching television violence, found that those who watched more violent television were convicted of more serious crimes and were more aggressive towards their children.

The television and its programs are powerful devices that should be watched with caution. Television will have an

Challenge of Information Today Is Making Effective Use of It

horace@goleader.com

By HORACE R. CORBIN
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

"Fifty-seven channels and nothing on" sang Bruce Springsteen. Media is flooded with "infomercials" and mire. Search the net for French apple pie and end up at the foreign legion. The baking never gets done. That's the challenge today with information and the media. There's a storm of it.

But, much is useless; it's "El Nino Nothing." Further confusing, it's not what is said, but what is not said.

Locally, what should be said about education, about parking, about pocket parks and open spaces, about voting and taxes, about community involvement? And who's going to be the first to say it? Not you or me. For if we did, complex matters would need to be peeled open beforehand.

In doing so, you'd want to be constructive; but some of your opinions could be wrong. Then, you'd take the heat. And you're trapped. If you don't express your views, then do you have a right to criticize?

You've asked on education: "Is it for the kids, for the administrators, or for the teachers union? Whose interests are really being furthered? If the mayors and council persons are the leaders of our communities, shouldn't they lead in discussing school system issues? Is it money that makes the difference in test scores?"

"And, where is the state going to get

More Columns On Page A-7

High School Student Feels School Day Should Start Later Than 7:30 a.m.

At Westfield High School, hundreds of students arrive at school as early as 7:30 a.m. For many of us, this is too early. Other schools in our country have realized that this is too early for kids our age to be properly functioning.

In Edina, Minnesota, the early morning 7:20 a.m. start was moved to 8:30 a.m., and teachers and students both agree that the change was beneficial for everyone. Teachers contested that students were paying more attention in class, and higher grades were earned. The school nurse agreed that there were fewer visits to the nurse from students as well.

Studies show that the extra hour of sleep that students would be getting is beneficial because it is that hour of sleep that makes a person feel like they've had a well-rested night. Feeling well-rested

HAZARD - HAZARD A GUESS

Most people would not hazard a guess that the word hazard, which currently means "danger," was originally an Arabic word for the implements used in one of today's most popular casino gambling games. Gamble along with us as we "make our point."

The trail of this hazardous etymology begins with the Arabic word al-zhar meaning "the die," the kind that people roll at the crap tables (we are on a roll). The game played with the al-zhar, and the word to describe these dotted cubes, was probably brought to Europe by Crusaders returning from the Holyland. Later, the French exported the game to England where it was called "crabs" and later "craps." (We shall save that for another column.)

Since the anglicized version of hazard took on the related sense of "danger," it is entirely appropriate that we issue the following warnings: Dice games can be hazardous to your financial health, Play at your own risk, and, finally, Don't go for broke!

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Maeve Turner Westfield