

editorials & commentary

Understanding For Fire Department

There is a letter on this page that everyone should read. It is an epistle of understanding, of common sense, and it projects a healthy attitude that we hope the rest of this community can share.

It is written by a man who was lucky to have escaped serious injury, perhaps even death, when a Potsdam fire truck rolled over onto his car and crushed it more than two weeks ago. The man and his two daughters all survived without serious injury.

The reason his letter is noteworthy is the fact that he does not blame the fire department for the unfortunate accident. In fact, he is answering comments that he has heard locally since that time, comments that have condemned the fire department in connection with the accident.

He is right. You cannot blame the entire department for this accident.

The Potsdam Volunteer Fire Department is an organization that has done immeasurable good for this community. The number of lives and the amount of property that they have saved over the course of the years should not easily be forgotten because of one accident. Indeed, the

Potsdam volunteers and a half dozen other volunteer companies toiled nearly eight back-breaking hours recently in fighting the Elliott Hardwood Fire. Some saw a bit of the local hero in each one of them after that.

Then, two days later, the whole scene changed. A fire truck was involved in an accident. True, it was not on the way to a fire. True, the driver was charged with driving while intoxicated. And those are serious circumstances.

And, as a result of those circumstances, we sincerely hope that the fire department will review, and possibly change, its policy of allowing trucks to be used for purposes other than fighting fires.

But we do not believe that the entire department should be badmouthed for this one accident.

The volunteers are extremely important to this community. They need our support, both financially and in terms of manpower. In fact, the department is looking for new volunteers to increase their numbers. Anyone who is interested in joining the department should contact one of the department members.

Post Office Buys Some Time

As a crisis, it turned out to be one of the non-events of the year so far.

And that is good news. Very bad news would have been any of a number of alternative outcomes—another potent upward twist of the inflationary spiral, a nationwide walkout, a long-term setback of reform, a collapse of already shaky public confidence in the postal system's ability to shape itself up.

As it did turn out, the postal workers settlement is a draw with a time limit. No one is really satisfied, particularly some union members who have their point with sporadic work stoppages. But it could have been worse for everyone.

The unions are getting much less than the 14 percent annual increases originally demanded, but they do have a three-year guarantee against mass staff reductions resulting from automation.

Postal Service management, dedicated to trimming personnel, yielded on the no-layoff issue this time. But it has held the settlement within limits which it says will not necessitate a postage rate increase for the duration of the contract.

The wage package working out to be an average 6.5 percent a year may not have been a victory for the administration, but it avoided another damaging defeat in the anti-inflation battle. It exceeds the standard of 5.5 percent set for federal employees in general, but its considerably less painless than big increases won by coal miners and railroad unions earlier in the year. It can serve as a reasonably good example for major contract negotiations coming up next year.

But the real achievement of the settlement may be in having bought time, three crisis-free

years in which to reorganize the postal structure and operations.

Congress and the administration are already well along toward reforming the reforms of 1970, which sought to isolate the service from politics and turn it into a profit-making government corporation run along the lines of a private business. It hasn't worked. Politics are being put back in with the postmaster general again becoming a presidential appointee and the inevitable Treasury subsidies removed from the emergency category.

Technological innovation should begin to yield some dividends. The service is beginning experiments with electronic messages transmission, including use of satellites in international communication. Such innovations, and increased use by private business of telephone-line facsimile systems, may have some effect in decreasing the cumbersome and costly physical moving about of mass quantities of paper.

Postal managers, however, believe the greatest improvements in both efficiency and cost effectiveness will come from increased mechanization and automation in mail handling.

Personnel costs account for 85 percent of the Postal Service's current \$17 billion budget, almost 1 percent of the gross national product. Some 90 thousand jobs have been trimmed, largely through attrition, during the past several years. In coming years, the service wants to be in a position to make further deep cuts in the present 700 thousand staff as technological advances make this possible. Which means the non-layoff clause, which union leaders see as their real victory in this contract, could be the do-or-die issue for both sides next time.

The real crisis for the Postal Service, and the public, may come three years from now.

Sold By The Pouch

There's no question about the suitability of French wine for consumption.

The frequent complaint, however, is that it doesn't always travel well.

But it's traveling first class compared with what one importer is reported to have in mind in the way of innovative packaging.

According to an item in The Wall Street Journal, test marketings are planned in New York and Texas of wine that comes not in the traditional bottles but in foil pouches.

The easily shipped containers, said to be already selling well in Europe, avoid the problems of breakage and tight or leaky corks. To open one of the eight-ounce pouches, just snip with scissors and pour—if you can hit the glass, so much the better.

It may be very practical and mark a great advance in bringing one of the finer things in life to a broader public.

But somehow, something still doesn't seem to be traveling very well—the romance of wine.

Courier & Freeman

A Park Newspaper

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letters

Mayor Replies To Parking Lot Editorial

To the Editor:
The editorial on July 18, 1978, concerning the development of the Prosh Parking lot by the Urban Renewal Agency contains certain information which is misleading on the basis of plans which have been drawn for this project.

The editorial states that "upwards of \$100,000" is to be spent to "turn an existing parking lot into an attractive parking lot." This is not true.

The present parking lot has a partial base course of asphalt, is improperly lighted, drained, curbed and marked. This work was accomplished several years ago to render the parking lot usable.

The \$100,000 figure stems from an average development cost of complete parking areas based on \$900 to \$1,000 per space on a nationwide basis. Since a major portion of the work has been accomplished, this lot will cost far less.

The editorial points out that the village has contractual commitments throughout its Urban Renewal Program to provide this parking lot, but goes on to state "other things that also need doing" should receive consideration.

The Village of Potsdam is legally bound under Urban Renewal to complete the Prosh Parking lot, and it seems only logical that the public interest will best be served by proceeding with required improvements and closing off Urban Renewal as soon as possible.

The plans for the Prosh parking lot are a matter of public record and have been available for public inspection since May.

Very truly yours,
Ruth F. Garner
Mayor

Writer Urges Turnout On Budget, Other Items

To the Editor:
In reading the article in the July 25, 1978 Courier and Freeman about the Potsdam school budget being cut even further, it seems to me that the biggest cuts were made in staff reductions and resignations. It seems funny to me that these two items were not noted about before the budget was presented to the public the first time. If we have to give teachers and other personnel a year's notice before they can be laid off, why

Child Helped Through Rescue Squad Auxiliary

To the Editor:
On June 23, 1978 our Well-Child Clinic office received a phone call from a social worker at Potsdam Hospital. A 5-year-old child was about to be released from the hospital and needed medical supplies to dress the wound at home. The parents indicated that they didn't have the necessary funds to buy these items because their resources had been depleted by the child's previous hospitalizations. The social worker called our office (the child is a participant in the WIC program) to see if we could get funds for medical supplies. Our clinic has no extra money for this particular need so that we had to try to contact other agencies.

After two hours of phone calls to agencies all over the area, we finally contacted the Potsdam Rescue Squad Auxiliary. The auxiliary was willing to help this family in their time of need. Within a half hour of our phone call, the mother had a check to pay for bandages and bandage solution and was able to take her son home. On behalf of our clinic and the family we would like to thank the Potsdam Rescue Squad Auxiliary for their help.

It is unfortunate that this family had to be in this situation, which brings up the questions of why we have no permanently funded agency which people can turn to in time of need. This is especially important because it has to do with the basic health and well being of this child, which everyone has a right to.

Thank you,
W.I.C. Staff
Martha McHugh,
Kay Luce and Diane Guyette

Accident Victims Don't Blame Fire Department

To the Editor:

On July 15, 1978, my two daughters and I were in a car which was crushed by a Potsdam Fire truck on Back Hamawa Road. Fortunately, our injuries were slight.

I have since learned that the driver of the fire truck, who was the most seriously injured person in the accident, will recover after a lengthy convalescent period. In a very strict sense, we were very lucky.

However, the primary purpose for this letter is to discuss a negative attitude towards the Potsdam Fire Department which I have heard expressed often since the accident. I personally don't share this attitude because I know that most of the firemen are dedicated, hard-

working, and competent individuals who sacrifice a great deal and who do their jobs well.

I sincerely hope that the people of Potsdam also consider the innumerable fires that these men have extinguished and the many times that they have saved lives and property. Our accident was unfortunate, but it is not fair that the entire department receive a "black eye."

Certainly it is not unreasonable to expect the fire department to exercise stricter controls over the use of their fire apparatus. This equipment is far too vital to the people of Potsdam to allow it to be used for other than emergency reasons. I also believe that the department must discipline or remove any member of the department who jeopardizes his life, as well as the lives of others, through the excessive use of alcohol.

The Potsdam Fire Department is a good fire fighting unit and should not be unjustly criticized as the result of one accident, involving only a few of its members. I strongly urge the people of Potsdam to continue to support its essential role in the community, its excellent fire fighting record, and its future fund raising efforts.

Sincerely yours,
Stanley V. Luce
Colton (Southampton), N.Y.

Raps Late Action On Home Rule Measure

To the Editor:
In September 1978, County Legislator Ralph Greco proposed a Local Law to the county Board that would have allowed for Home Rule in filling vacancies that existed on the County Board.

The resolution was defeated strictly on a party line basis. Every Democrat voted no and every Republican voted yes.

The accounting in the newspaper read that Ralph Greco voted with the Republicans. About the same time in 1976 Ulster County Board passed a similar Local Law. Governor Carey did not wish to relinquish the dictatorial right to make appointments himself, and the Local Law was voided in Ulster County. Ulster County went to court. The result was the highest court in the state declared it unconstitutional for the Governor to fill local vacancies.

Had the Democratic controlled Board gone along with Mr. Greco in 1978, St. Lawrence County would have taken the lead as did Ulster County in bringing about Democratic processes.

At the July 10th board meeting the entire board unanimously decided to do what Mr. Greco's resolution would have let them do in 1978.

The only thing St. Lawrence County has taken the lead in over the past four years seems to be unemployment and excessive government spending.

Very truly yours,
Edward G. Johnson
693 Main St.
Ogdensburg, N.Y.

Hatch Road Needs Repaving Most, Writer Says

To the Editor:
I nominate the Hatch Road as the road most in need of repaving by the Town of Potsdam. Are there any other nominations?

E. Wells
P.O. Box 407
Potsdam

The Courier and Freeman welcomes letters from readers. The writer must sign his or her name for publication and give a complete address and telephone number through which the letter can be verified. Names will be withheld by request at the discretion of the editor and only for good reasons. Letters should be typed and double spaced, if possible. If not, they should be neatly written or printed, double spaced. The Courier and Freeman reserves the right to condense and edit letters.

From Our Files

West Potsdam, 1905-D.E. Payne came up here from Potsdam this a.m. in a wagon. We think he is the first one this spring.

West Stockholm, 1906—Our creamery is now furnished its power with a large gasoline engine. It is a Fairbank make and considered one of the best on the market.

Wool—I am prepared to exchange with farmers wool cloths, shirtings, sheetings and yarns. R. Stafford, West Stockholm.

Hannawa Falls, 1906—Miss Sullivan, our primary teacher, arrived in town last Saturday. Our school commenced Monday. Ella Donovan has the high department.

Bucks Bridge mill burns—Fire broke out in the Spears lumber and shingle mill and in spite of all that could be done, the entire plant was burned to the ground. Loss is estimated at \$5,000, a hard blow to the little hamlet, as it was the only local industry.

1938—Baby Derby Darlings contest sponsored by the Courier and Freeman and local merchants during the summer of 1938. Among the 100 contestants were Carl Christy, Gary Grant, Marlene Sullivan, Paul LaClaire, Richard Kilroy, Sue Kennedy and Eugene Osgood. M.E. Chandler of West Stockholm was the winner, with Douglas Johnson and Gary Grant second and third.

1938—Early hay contest—Cooperative Extension held a competition for the most loads of hay cut before July 15. Crasper Farms had 223 loads, Sison Farm, 183.

1938—The new highway between Potsdam and Nicholville, 15.37 miles was completed.

1938—Racquette Valley Restaurant featured quick lunches and dinners for 50 cents. It was run by Marion Page on Pierrepont Avenue.

Democrats gained control of the Potsdam village board. Bernard Lenny was elected mayor; Harry Bronson and Ken McGowan, trustees.

Dic Manfred, Daryl Sullivan and William Wakefield shared first prize in physics with a solar furnace at the Potsdam Central science fair.

Mrs. William Chamant tells that in 1803 Benjamin Raymond laid out the wide streets in Potsdam, Elm, Market, Maple, and Main. He planned that roads from neighboring towns should lead into Potsdam. By 1825 trees were set out; Harry Knowles, who built his house at 48 Elm St., was a leader in this work. He was ably assisted by Azel Lyman. Some thought it foolish, "haven't we just got the woods cleared out?" Some persons with an eye for beauty prevailed.

Compiled by Earl Pattison

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