

EDITORIALS

Remember 'em

The holiday we observe this weekend has its origin in our nation's darkest era: the time of the Civil War.

In what is something of a grand American tradition of more than one place, person or organization claiming to be first, the first Memorial Day observance is something that is confusing because of the number of conflicting versions of the story. Some say North (New York state), some say South.

The tradition on both sides, however, was clear: it was a day set aside to decorate the graves of those killed in the Civil War, hence its early name, Decoration Day.

It's easy to get caught up in this kind of back and forth — indeed, it's something we as Americans seem to delight in doing — but it's vital not to get too caught up in it. The important thing is that Memorial Day, as we know it now, is supposed to be a day to honor all our nation's war dead, that is to say, all those who have been killed fighting to preserve our nation.

Sure, Memorial Day comes with its celebrations, as it marks an unofficial beginning to summer, but also it should be a solemn time when those who have made possible our prosperous way of life are honored.

Across Harford County, Memorial Day observances are planned, many beginning at 11 a.m. in a tradition that dates to the end of World War I and a different holiday weekend.

Attending these services is one way to observe. Flying a flag is another. And taking time out for a moment of silence or a short prayer is another.

However you choose to spend Memorial Day, it is important to take time to remember it's not about sales and barbecues but about the people who died to make sure we can enjoy our lives. If we allow the solemn observance to be dropped from the holiday, it won't be long before we have nothing to celebrate either.

A good cut

Harford County already doesn't provide garbage pickup as a government service, unlike other metro Baltimore counties, so it might seem like no big deal to further curtail the solid waste services offered by the county government.

At least that seems to be the attitude of the administration of County Executive David R. Craig. For years prior to Craig taking office, the county government has sought to make the landfill into a financially self-sufficient operation. The idea is that rather than using general fund tax revenue to pay for the operation of the landfill, a tipping fee charged for each ton of garbage dumped will cover operational costs.

This financial model is the same one water and sewer systems use in Maryland: water bill revenue can only be used to pay for water plant operations; sewer bill revenue can be used only for waste water treatment and related functions. Similarly, other tax revenue can't be used for water and sewer operations.

The big difference between the water and sewer funds and the landfill fund is state law requires the water and sewer funds to be separate; the separate landfill fund is something the county can take or leave.

Not surprisingly, and this pre-dates Craig by many years, when the tipping fee was instituted and the county stopped using regular tax fund money for the landfill, there was no corresponding cut in tax rates.

The latest scheme proposed with regard to the landfill operation was the Craig Administration's idea of increasing the tipping fee charged to the private haulers most people in Harford County end up hiring to pick up their garbage. The tipping fee is an indirect tax on everyone who pays for garbage collection as haulers must pass this expense along to their customers, just like they do any other expense.

The tipping fee increase was defeated, but then the administration came back and proposed cutting services (hours of operation) at the landfill to make up for the extra money that would have been taken in through a tipping fee increase.

The Harford County Council wisely rejected the proposed cut in services. Harford County has been awash in money for several years, thanks to an income tax rate hike enacted courtesy of Craig's predecessor, Jim Harkins, and to a massive increase in property taxes collected as assessments went through the roof in recent years.

Considering what we're paying already in various forms of county taxes, and that other metro counties have garbage collection as part of basic government services, Harford County has no business proposing either an increase in garbage-related fees nor a cut in solid waste collection services.

The council did the right thing by rejecting both.

Computer glitch

For those who missed it, there was quite a nugget in the "50 YEARS AGO" column written by Kathleen Button published Wednesday.

In a rehash of the primary election from a half of a century ago, Button wrote "Observers credited voting machines with speeding the process as results were received from Perryman within 25 minutes of the polls closing." Shazaam! A mere 25 minutes from Perryman to Bel Air?

Wow, as the technology revolution has made our world spin faster and faster, it seems the only thing that has slowed has been getting Harford County's election results. We know it can't be so, but it seems with each election, it takes longer and longer to get election results. Take this most recent primary held in March, for example. It was a seemingly all-night affair.

The promise of using available high-speed technology to get the election results in the blink of an eye, at least in Harford County, is another unfulfilled campaign promise. Our kids, who all seem to have cell phones, can send a text message to anyone any place in the world in a nano of a nanosecond. But we can't get election results from one end of Harford County to the other in anything less than hours and hours.

So 50 years ago, the county was abuzz with how quickly votes were available, receiving the ballots from Perryman in 25 minutes of the polls closing. Shucks, that speed would create a buzz in Harford County in 2008. And those 25 minutes may have been less, if the buckboard carrying the ballots didn't have to stop at a couple of train crossings.

The more technology we get and the faster it helps us go, the slower we find out who got how many votes.

Letters to the editor

are welcomed by *The Aegis*, and correspondents are reminded that brief ones are invariably better read. In any case, the limit for letters submitted for publication is 300 words. The deadline for letters intended for Wednesday's edition is noon Monday and Friday's edition noon Wednesday.

All letters must be signed. They must also include a full address and telephone number, although these will not be published. While the free expression of diverse views and ideas on the part of our correspondents is encouraged, light editing for grammar and spelling may be expected. Letters also may be submitted by e-mail to news@theaegis.com, but should include home address and daytime phone number. *The Aegis*, of course, reserves the right to reject any letter deemed unsuitable for publication.

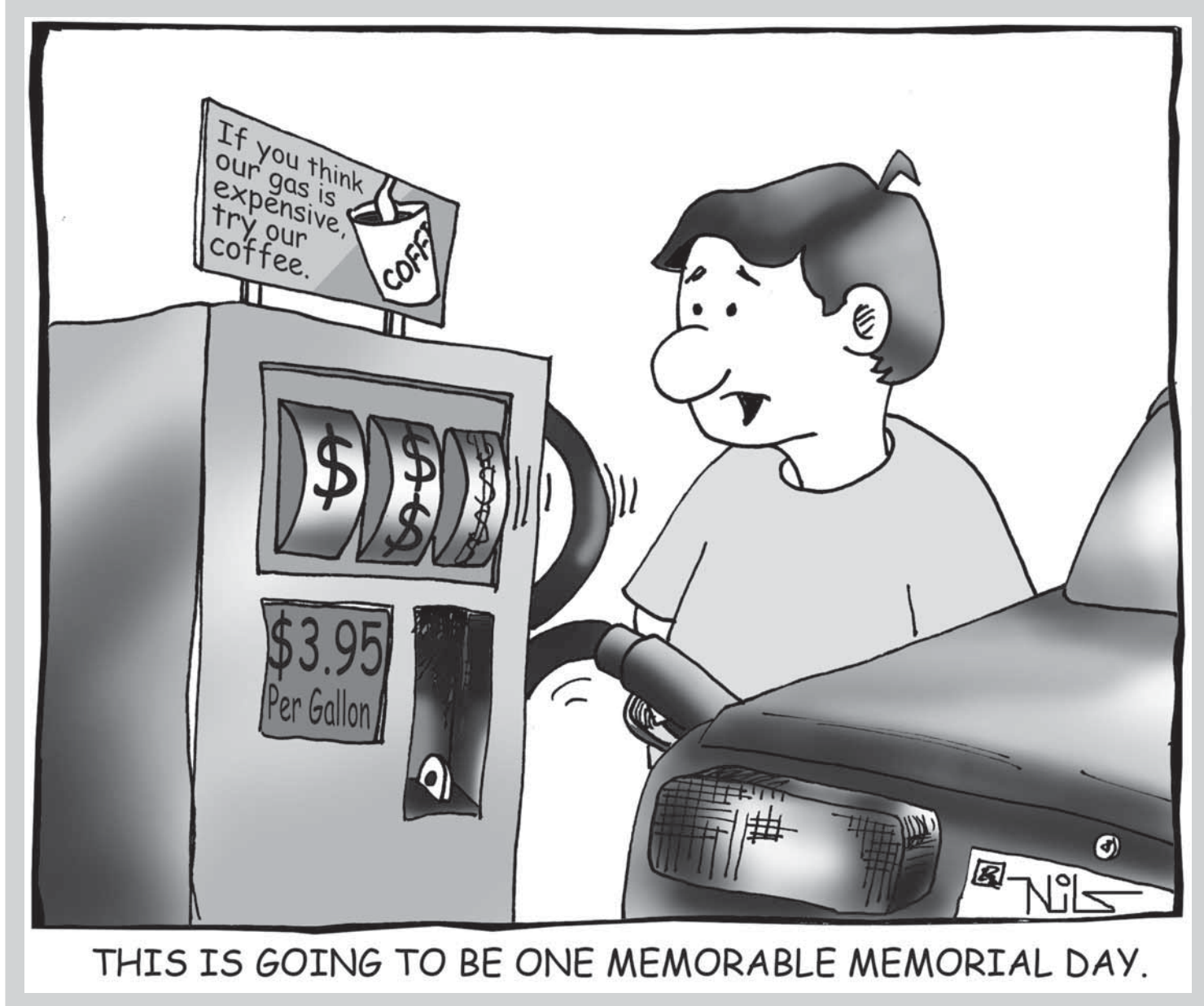
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OPEN FORUM



In their words

'I was like the cleanup guy in Detroit.'

DR. LAWRENCE RUDOLPH,
EDGEWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL'S
NEW PRINCIPAL

2,096 Harford pets vaccinated

Fighting rabies

Editor:

A total of 2,096 dogs, cats, and ferrets were vaccinated against rabies at the Harford County Health Department Rabies Vaccination Clinics April 27 and May 4.

The Harford County Health Department is truly appreciative of the positive publicity provided by *The Aegis* in supporting this worthwhile endeavor. The Harford County Health Department also wishes to take this opportunity to extend its sincere appreciation to the volunteer fire companies: Bel Air, Whiteford, Abingdon, Susquehanna Hose, Jarrettsville, Joppa - Magnolia, Aberdeen and Darlington as

well as the participating veterinarians: Gretchen Ruby, Gail Beavers, Tracy Morgan, Nathan Pate, David Moore, Lena Wensel, Joseph Mullen, Keith Gold, Lisa Baker, Heidi Fritz, Sarah Beck and Stephanie Finley.

Without the cooperation of the media, volunteer fire companies, local veterinarians and Health Department staff, these clinics would not have enjoyed the success they have achieved over the years, nor benefited the community we serve, as greatly as they have.

David Reiher, R.S., Chief
Rabies and Vector Control
Harford County Health Department

These kids were lighting the way

Editor:

These days, teenagers often make the news if they've done something wrong. I want to let the public know about some teens who did it right.

On May 16, the South Harford County Relay For Life event took place at Joppatowne High School. Members of the Aberdeen High School Leo Club, sponsored by the Aberdeen Lions Club, as well as members of the Aberdeen High School National Honor Society volunteered to help with preparation for the Luminary Ceremony. Anyone familiar with Relay For Life knows that it is our hope to find a cure for cancer and has probably seen the word "hope" spelled out with white luminaria bags on the bleachers. This year the bags had to be placed on a hillside since we

were not able to use the bleachers.

The Aberdeen High students set up the bags to spell out "hope" on a rain soaked slippery and steep hillside taking care to stabilize each bag so they didn't slide down the embankment. They also alphabetized luminaria bags, filled them with sand and candles, and placed them along the path before the Survivor Ceremony took place at dark. The remarkable thing is these fine students took control of the chores and organized these bags with very little guidance from me or anyone else. They had to be wet and cold as drizzle continued to fall. They were under pressure, as the task had to be completed by dark. And, they were probably hungry since they worked through dinner hour to accomplish their task. They all worked with diligence

and cheerful attitudes.

I cannot say enough positive things about these students and I hope they will receive community service from their school for their fine work.

Not to be left out were students from the Harford Home School Organization. These students helped out with any task asked of them and they were much appreciated!

Thank you for allowing me to express my appreciation of some of Harford's finest students. Having worked with the schools for many years, I know there are many fine young people out there and they should receive acknowledgment when warranted.

Nancy R. Lagan
Fallston
South Harford County
Luminary chairman

Post prom party successes

Editor:

The 2008 Project Graduation Committee of C. Milton Wright High School hosted its first After Prom Party on May 17 at the Bel Air Athletic Club from midnight until 5 a.m., immediately following the school's Prom.

With this first After Prom Party for our school, C. Milton Wright joins the ranks of most area high schools in providing a safe and substance-free event for senior students to enjoy after the Prom.

The party was a success with 240 students and guests attending this first year!

The students enjoyed a variety of activities including swimming, sumo wrestling, jumping on a Velcro wall, casino games, balancing on a mechanical surf board, racing on go-racers, playing video games and more. There was music, plenty of food and drinks, and over 100 prizes to win. Thank you to the awesome parents at Bel Air High School, Fallston High School and North Harford High School, who shared their expertise with us on hosting a successful After Prom Party. We would not have been able to do it without you!

Launching this event at C. Milton Wright was a yearlong effort and involved hundreds of hours of dedication by a wonderful group of parent volunteers on the Project Graduation Committee, as well

as the commitment of dozens of local businesses, individuals and community groups.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Jones Junction and General Manager, Steve Smeltzer, who donated a car as our ultimate door prize and to Best Buy for donating a Wii as a door prize and for providing staff and equipment for an awesome video game room.

We would also like to extend our thanks and overwhelming appreciation to the following sponsors who made this event a success and started a legacy at C. Milton Wright High School: Dr. Lee Tannenbaum, the late Sen. Bob Hooper, Ladew Topiary Gardens, Bonefish Grill, Harford Mutual Insurance Company, BJ's, Wal-Mart, Klein's, Greek Village Restaurant, Qdoba, Giovanni's, PepBoys, Freddie's, Winters Run Golf Course, Bud's Car Wash, Brooms Bloom, Cold Stone, the Bel Air Athletic Club, HCC, Bull on the Beach, Churchville Golf, Two Sisters Gallery, Fred Cruetzer, Richard Kuczak, Applebee's, McComas Funeral Home, Harman's Produce, Cecil Bank, Jim Piccione of Coldwell Banker, Georgeanna Garceau, Clark Turner, the Southampton Middle School PTO, the CMW

PTSO and Parent Involvement Committee, Chipotle, Elly Ripkin, Thomas Reynolds, Churchville Rec. Council, Hickory Fountain Green Rec.

Council, GE Tignall & Co., Hickory Foods, Inc. (Burger King), PNC Bank, Flagship Cinemas, Mars, Chick-Fil-A, Jonathan's Florist, Safeway, Coca-Cola of Havre de Grace, Outback Steakhouse, Silver Spring Mining Co., Giant, Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co., Frito-Lay, Vitali's Restaurant, Bel Air Florist, LaChic Salon, McDaniel College Bookstore, Marian B. Malone of Pampered Chef, Linda Sorino of Cookie Lee, Hair Cuttery, Slavie Federal, Corrine Williams, Villa Julie College Bookstore, and Loyola College Bookstore.

Also, thank you to the families of underclassman at our school who made a financial commitment to this event and its future. And last, but not least, a huge thank you to our wonderful CMW parents of seniors on this committee who donated time, money, products, creativity, energy & devotion. You can rest in a job well done and know you were part of the inaugural committee that launched the CMW After Prom Party that will be keeping students safe on Prom night for years and year to come!

The 2008 CMW Project
Graduation Committee

Editor:

The Alternative Education Program at the Center for Educational Opportunity held its first Junior-Senior Prom May 2 at the AEP. The Prom Committee and Mark

Buzminsky, principal, would like to thank the following people and organizations who contributed funding and talent to make "A Night in Manhattan" an enjoyable evening for our students.

Joe Ryan and the Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy; Target of Aberdeen; Klein's Family Markets; Comcast of Harford County; Beauchic Boutique Inc.; Aberdeen Police Department; Aberdeen Lioness; Mr. Michael Lichner and the AEP FOT class; Barbara Hathaway and the AEP art students; Ernest Billings and Brandon White; Veronica Ryan and Wanda Bowers, AEP cafeteria staff; Warren Robinson, Shirley Sconion and Max Taylor, AEP custodial staff; Diane Jackson, Aberdeen High School; Officers Jacqueline Mercado and Karen Kearns, APD, school resource officers; Montika Shepherd, Amber Gee and family members; Amber Brook Kelly and Zach Groth; Steven Cunningham, A.P. AEP, Officer J.R. Adkins, APD, and "Miss Piggy."

Again, our sincere thanks to all, including the "beautiful people," our students, who attended and made the evening memorable.

Ann Cymek,
Ellen Dael, Fran Powers,
Janie Robinson
The Alternative Education
Program 2008 Prom
Committee,