

Viewpoints

School plan a real bargain

Members of the Committee of 21 should be praised for the long hours they put into developing a sound, comprehensive plan for upgrading the physical condition of the county's schools.

Although the committee members conscientiously tackled the challenged put before them and finished their task on schedule, those who served are guilty of placing their fellow taxpayers in the throes of a dilemma.

As a consequence of their report, which was made after five months of study, taxpayers now face the choice of letting the condition of the schools continue to deteriorate or of approving a comprehensive \$6.2 million fixup plan, which will probably result in a tax increase.

To us and to the committee members, the choice is a clear one.

The plan calls for the use of 60%, instead of 40%, of the county's share of the new one-half cent sales tax to go to the schools. About \$430,000 is pouring into the county coffers each year as a result of the new state tax. These funds were not included in the current fiscal year's budget, but were relied on heavily to keep the county afloat.

If the full 60% could be used, the funds would cover the costs of the 10-year school rehab plan, which includes a \$2.5 million bond issue, and no ad valorem tax increase would be needed.

However, county officials are saying that they are not only going to need the extra 20% in sales tax, but this year's operations may also require additional taxes to maintain the current level of service.

Therefore, the county officials say, in order to

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fund the school rehab plan and keep up county services, a tax hike will be required.

Under the proposal recommended by the Committee of 21, additional sales tax funds of about \$86,000 per year would be needed to build 78 new classrooms in the county and to upgrade existing school facilities. The extra funds would be required through 1989.

If a tax increase were required to cover the fix-up program, the cost for a family living in a \$30,000 home would be \$9 per year or a total of \$45. Owners of a \$50,000 residence would pay \$15 annually or \$75 for the five years.

The plan is solid. If a tax increase is required, it is a bargain.

We encourage county officials to approve the recommendations of the Committee of 21 and not

to mingle its funding costs with those of the county.

If sales tax funds cannot be used to fund the program, then a small ad valorem tax increase must pay the costs of upgrading the schools.

Although we generally oppose tax increases, we believe in this case the hike is justified and a means of eventually reducing individual tax burdens.

We need to increase our tax base and reduce the burden on existing property owners. That will require the addition of more taxpayers.

In order to attract new residents and employers, we must maintain the schools, and we cannot allow them to be anything except excellent. Strong schools can be our best asset.

If we let the schools deteriorate, we may never have a top quality educational system, and we will continue to maintain our current status of having one of the highest ad valorem tax rates in the state.

Governor's runoff predicted

People and Issues

REAGAN AND FALWELL . . .

Each year *Conservative Digest*, Washington's leading conservative magazine, asked its leaders to name the conservatives they admire most among members of Congress, men not in Congress and Women not in Congress.

This year's results are in and President Reagan was given top honors for conservative man not in Congress. Dr. Jerry Falwell placed as second most admired conservative man not in Congress. The most admired woman not in Congress was Phyllis Schlafly. And most admired member of Congress was U.S. Senator Jesse Helms.

HOME SCHOOLING . . . We read that between 10,000 and 50,000 children in this country are being taught at home. In some places, the Constitutional right of parents to teach their children is recognized by state authorities. In others, parents keep their children out of the public schools by registering them in private schools and then keeping them home or simply by not telling authorities about their children.

There are many reasons parents want to teach their children at home. For example, Seventh Day Adventists do not believe in sending their children to school before age eight.

With few exceptions, children taught at home are better educated than children educated in the

public schools. They get along better with adults and many are able to enter college at age fifteen or sixteen.

Richard A. Viguerie, well-known Washington writer, calls attention to the fact that home schooling was the rule rather than exception for most of the nation's history. Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Robert Frost, Margaret Mead are among the presidents, poets, and scientists who received much of their education at home.

However, school has changed much during the latter part of the century. The education establishment opposes home schooling as a threat to some of its most cherished notions.

FORD . . . Old timers can remember when you could order a new Ford automobile in "any color you want -- as long as it's black." That's the kind of choice some American liberals want to give the people of El Salvador: Elect any government you want, as long as it's socialist. Elect any president you want as long as it's not Roberto d'Aubuisson.

MORTALITY TABLE . . . We read that the first mortality table in the U.S. was prepared in 1789, when Professor Edward Wigglesworth of Harvard University compiled a modified table based on Mass. experience.

By Cliff Blue
PRIMARY . . . By the time this column is in print in most newspapers, Tuesday, May 8, the primary will be over, except for a later run-off primary between the two-top candidates in one or more races.

With this in mind I will not predict the winner, and would not if the primary were a month ahead.

I feel that in the Democratic governor's race there will certainly be a run-off.

PER CAPITA INCOME . . . The U.S. News and World Report reported 1983 had the smallest growth in American income in the past two decades.

The U.S. Capita income in the United States averaged \$11,675 -- up 5.2% over 1982.

The income in Alaska was \$16,820, up 1.3%.

North Carolina was 12th from the bottom of income increases. North Carolina was \$9,656 or 6.7% above the previous year.

Top income was \$16,820 -- an average increase of 1.3%.

Wyoming declined 2% to \$11,969; Oklahoma declined 0.5%.

TRUMAN . . . By the way, former President Harry Truman, was born May 8, 1884, and died 88 years later in 1972. He would have been 100 years old had he lived to May 8, 1984. President Truman was a plain speaking man who said what he believed and is now regarded as an outstanding statesman.



Memorial echoes peace prayer

By Lucien Coleman

Last night I slept 39 years this side of hell. My room was in the Hiroshima Tokyu Inn, less than a kilometer from the center of the atomic holocaust which had enveloped the city on August 6, 1945.

This morning I went to the Peace Memorial Park. The park stands in an area between the Motoyasu and the Hon Rivers, the business center of Hiroshima in days gone by.

In front of the Peace Memorial Museum stands the Fountain of Prayer, one of the most beautiful fountains in Japan. Its 567 spray jets can send 11 tons of water per minute to a height of as much as ten meters, the brochure says. At night it is illuminated by 153 underwater lamps. Impressive information. But all of it is forgotten when a Japanese friend says, "This fountain is dedicated to the souls of those who died here, crying, 'Water! Water!'"

Things That Matter

Among the dead were several hundred school girls who had come to Hiroshima to help demolish buildings. They had been toiling under the bright August sun when the bomb exploded shortly after nine in the morning. The lucky ones died instantly. Their charred bodies were found on the bank of the Motoyasu River, desperately clinging to one another. The less fortunate quit breathing a day later.

The museum contains numerous reminders of the unthinkable horrors of nuclear war. Photographs of living corpses, their burnt flesh hanging in shreds, stumbling through hot ruins. A human shadow imprinted on granite steps by the searing fireball. Traces of the deadly "Black Rain," a shower of radioactive mud, which had

pelted down for two hours after the explosion. Blood-smeared children standing in piles of smoking rubble, crying for parents who would never come.

I couldn't resist rationalizing, reminding myself that those atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki had cut the war short, saving both America and Japan from the long, bloody battle which would surely have been fought on the Japanese mainland. It also occurred to me that the victims of Pearl Harbor were no less dead than those who had perished here.

But the thought of those schoolgirls haunted me. And the pictures of children, dying of radiation disease.

Before I turned to go back to the Hiroshima Tokyu Inn, I paused long enough to echo the prayer spoken by the city's Mayor Hamai in 1948: "I pray from the bottom of my heart that no more Hiroshimas will be created on this earth."



Keeping up with Modern Technology isn't easy

By Warren Johnston

A while back my wife bought a computer.

She and the dog had gotten together for an in-depth discussion several days earlier and decided the one thing our household needed was something to keep us in touch with today's fast-moving society.

"I'm afraid we are being left behind by Modern Technology," my wife said.

"We're going to buy you a computer. Then we'll be ready for the coming age, and you can write the Great American Novel," she said, adding a bit of trivia about idle hands.

She knew the fear of missing Modern Technology was one which affected many of the state's rural residents, and that it was a compelling argument to convince me that we were out of step.

Even the boys down at the coffee shop had been saying we needed to get up with Modern Technology the next time he came to town.

"We don't want to miss the boat like we did the last time he came through," one of them at the back table had said.

In fact, the entire town had been talking lately about trying to keep pace with the outside world. My wife plugged that into her sales approach.

"You've even written about it in the newspaper," she said.

My wife also knew that I had been talking about writing the novel of the century for years, but had never gotten around to starting it. This new computer would force me to get started, she said.

The Puppy Papers

I resisted. I knew there were other things we needed first.

"What if we buy a toaster instead. It would give you a chance to see how you like living with a modern gadget around the house," I said, pointing out that there were several items well ahead of a computer on our budgeted wish list.

Toasters no longer hold the place of prominence in our society they once did, "and, besides, who ever heard of writing a novel on one," she said.

After several months of continued resistance, I weakened, and the other day we were off to the bank and then to the computer store.

"This will be great," she said on the way home. "You can start writing your novel tonight, and I can put all household expenses on the computer. We'll never have to balance a checkbook again," she chortled.

"I still think we should've gotten a toaster," I grunted.

In a way, it is refreshing to know that even computers have not replaced the written word. After the first three minutes, we realized we did not know how to operate our new toy, and were forced to resort to reading the written instructions.

The computer salesman had warned us. "You have to read the instruction books before you can operate your new 'Brain II,'" he had said.

What he had not told us was that there were at least 10 in-

struction books which needed to be read in order to become proficient at operating the Brain II.

"Let's try it out," my wife said after our fourth hour of reading to each other.

It soon became clear that we had not read enough. After another two hours and three more books, we tried again. All we could master was a game designed for preschoolers. It was 4 a.m.

Fortunately, the next day was Saturday. We put in another 12 hours of applied reading. We played "Space Invaders." It was billed as a game "the whole family will love." We hated it.

Sunday the routine was the same, and we learned to play "Stockbroker." A game for keen, but immature business minds.

We were driven. We kept at it, and after a week, my wife had learned to write a letter. I was still hung up on "Stockbroker."

She wrote to her mother, and asked her to keep the dog, who had been neglected since we first brought home Brain II.

The more we read, the less we seemed to know. Finally, we decided to enroll in a computer course at a nearby tech school.

"It's our only hope. If we don't, we will be left behind forever," my wife said.

She was right, and after we finish the course, it will be nice to know that when Modern Technology comes to town, we'll be ready. Although I still believe we should have bought a toaster first.

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