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Horace R. Corbin PUBLISHER	Gail S. Corbin GENERAL MANAGER
Paul J. Peyton MANAGING EDITOR	Suzette F. Stalker ASSISTANT EDITOR
Karen M. Hinds OFFICE MANAGER	Joanna B. Marsh MARKETING DIRECTOR

David B. Corbin SPORTS
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Moving Into Former Warehouse Marks Milestone for Commission

Last week, the Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC) held a ceremony to celebrate an event which may be their biggest accomplishment to date — the opening of their first owned, not leased, building for the education of severely physically disabled students.

Through the issuance of \$5.2 million in bonds through the Union County Improvement Authority, the commission purchased, last year, the 60,000 square-foot former Commerce Clearinghouse warehouse building in the Town of Westfield. After the termination of a former lease and with only eight months to spare, 48,000 square feet of the building was converted into space for the new home of the Westlake Elementary School.

After 18 years in Berkeley Heights, where the program flourished through initiatives including Career Days, a pre-vocational development program, school supermarket and community service programs, the commission had only 18 months to locate and rehabilitate a new building for opening this past fall. A tall order, yes. But not impossible...just ask the "special needs" students at Westlake.

Just as the students have refused to let their handicaps interfere with achieving successful and productive lives, the staff and administration of the UCESC was determined from the get-go to find a suitable home for Westlake.

Not only did they find a home for Westlake with space to spare, but the commission was able to move Beadleston High School from its previous location at the Brewer Elementary School in Clark to the new facility. Moving is nothing new for the commission, since both Westlake and Beadleston have continued to

enhance their programs during previous relocations.

Westlake, started in a few classrooms at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield some 30 years ago, is an experience which founding Principal Dr. Jane P. Padalino recalled had the staff moving its materials out of the rooms every Friday afternoon to make way for the church's Sunday School program. Also, funeral processions filed by just as students were let out for the day in the afternoon. The school then moved to the Baptist Church and to the now defunct Columbus School, both in Westfield, before moving to Berkeley Heights.

Beadleston has moved twice — from St. Michael's School and Convent in Elizabeth to Clark, and then to its permanent home in Westfield.

The UCESC was the first of its kind when created in the 1960s. Today, there are 10 commissions serving 11 counties in the state. In addition to providing education and therapy for Union County's most physically disabled students, the program has generated additional cost-saving initiatives such as transportation for non-district public and non-public school children attending the commission's schools and other special education or vocational programs and the consolidation of fuel oil and textbook purchase costs.

Of course, the biggest savings to the 22 school districts are the commission's educational programs for disabled students that would be cost prohibitive for any one district to tackle by itself. This is what the term "shared services" among municipalities and the county is all about.

The expanded school building includes a full range of improvements including vocational education, food services, industrial arts, pre-vocational education and education in health.

POPCORN™

Godzilla: A Monster for the 90's

By Michael S. Goldberger



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

2 & 1/2 popcorns
 "Its foot is as long as this bus."
 So reads an ad for *Godzilla* currently adorning our public transport. You can't help but smile. It captures the precise mood — cinema as media event.

Exactly the type of exploitative irony you'd expect to roll by in the film itself, audaciously celebrating the smirky cachet that this latest bit of motion picture hucksterism epitomizes.

For this *Godzilla* is a frivolous reflection of its times, a buff, full-figured monster for the '90s. But don't count on him to truly scare you unless you're under 10. While stylishly hi-tech, expectedly cutting edge and requisitely awesome, this politically correct *Godzilla* can't commit to total terrorization. Victims are bloodless and nameless. Attempting to be all things to all people, the chic behemoth is only missing a GAP tag on its tail.

The gauzy opening sequences pay minor homage to the creature's 1956 roots. Strange doings around French Polynesia remind that one too many nuclear tests was conducted there. Humanity has tampered, and will be punished for its folly. Switch to a Japanese fishing trawler. Music director David Arnold unleashes his first volley of horror movie music — too loud, too momentous, but comfortingly hokey. There will be no shocking surprises.

This is unlike my first experience with *Godzilla*, long before Toho sold the rights to Sony, when I hid under my seat. Sure, he's big. But I'm big now, too. I actually want to see the monstrosity.

Next scene: a lone survivor of the ship lies in a hospital bed, staring in space, blank horror in his eyes. "Gojira," the shell-shocked victim utters. "Gojira." Huh? What's he talking about, Gojira? And what if they did understand that he was saying *Godzilla*? No one in this film knows who or what *Godzilla* is — yet. (We want the monster!)

Then comes the traditional gathering of experts and warrior types as director Roland Emmerich, working from a script he co-wrote with Dean Devlin, Ted Elliot and Terry Rossio, begins to set the stage for his enfant terrible. These introductions are poured pell-mell to the dramatically synthetic backdrop of hurrying helicopters and scurrying government types. Everyone's excited about something, though the audience still isn't in on the deal. (We want the monster!)

Switch to Chernobyl, the Ukraine. Nerd biologist Dr. Niko Tatopoulos (Matthew Broderick) merrily chants "Singing In The Rain" while studying indigenous worms that have grown larger as a result of the nuclear accident. Of course, the gov'nt types are going to need him for their little project. So they confiscate the good doctor and bring him to the Big Apple, where *Godzilla* will eventually make his grand entrance.

There Broderick's lacklustre lead human joins fellow monster mayvinn Dr. Elsie Chapman (Vicki Lewis), a paleontologist who only accepts the biologist because he's cute, and jung ho Colonel Hicks (elicited with just the right tongue-in-cheek sobriety by Kevin Dunn) representing the military point of view. But no full shot of *Godzilla* yet. (We want the monster!)

At command central the team is immediately beleaguered by hypercritical Mayor Ebert (Michael Lerner), a painfully portrayed buffoon whose sycophantic aide just so happens to be a balding guy named Gene (Get it? As in film critics Siskel and Ebert? But why?). With the stereotypes in place, the rain of terror can begin, you would think. But not before introducing yet a few more perfunctory players. After all, what self-respecting horror movie is without a whole set of superficial characters working out an innocuous soap opera that seems entirely dissociated from the dastardly doings? Not this one. (We want the monster!)

Playing the gal that left Dr. Nick behind is Maria Ptillo as ambitious Audrey, wannabe TV reporter who's being harassed by her smarmy boss (Harry Shearer). Hmm, if only she knew someone on the inside track of this *Godzilla* thing. Trying to find the acting groove in a horror picture overstuffing with hype and special effects is an art unto itself — akin to hitting a moving target. Unsure where to aim her emphasis, Miss Ptillo's performance is ineffectual, even by schlock movie standards.

Then there's Victor "The Animal" Palotti, the dauntless news cameraman played by Hank Azaria, who, for some reason or another, must have chosen Leo Gorcey's Muggs McGinnis (The Bowery Boys) as the inspiration for his curious salute to the blue collar hero. Thankfully rounding out the cast, and stealing the movie from Broderick when he's not looking, which is often, is Jean Reno (*The Professional*) as the mysterious Frenchman, Philippe Roache; he says he's an insurance man. Wink, wink.

Alas, with the players finally in place, the fashionably late *Godzilla* enters stage right. Up until this point the viewer has only been teased with a thundering stomp of a foot or an inadvertently damaging swish of a tail. And now, here he is, looking every bit like a blown-up, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade version of the tyrannosaurus rex from *Jurassic Park*. But, not bad, actually. Not bad at all.

Whether the title behemoth got this big through nuclear radiation or by stumbling over an open bottle of Viagra, there's no denying the sheer grandiosity of its presence. And once the rampage begins in full earnest, much of it is exciting. Especially when the *Godzilla* hunters learn their pal has deposited eggs (yup, coming out of the closet and outdoing Ellen, the hermaphroditic protagonist is both he and she) somewhere in Manhattan; they have to find and destroy the baby *Godzillas* before they hatch. Don't miss the taxi chase scene — delightful shades of Jonah and the whale. It's this sort of brazen whimsy that saves the film from predominantly mediocre acting and a plot that seems to lose its place every few scenes. Well, at least the voices are in synch, this go-round.

In this time I don't hide under my seat, so it can't be that fearsome. The six-year-old girl in front of me buries her face in Daddy's chest during *Godzilla*'s scariest parts. What a baby.

Godzilla, rated PG-13, is a Tri-Star Pictures release directed by Roland Emmerich and stars Matthew Broderick, Maria Ptillo, and Jean Reno. Running time: 139 minutes.



INDENT

Like people, certain words are very impressionable. Indent, along with indenture, dent and dint, are such words. In addition to making their mark, they are also words that etymologists can "sink their teeth into."

Hopefully, the obvious trail of clues left in the above paragraph has led you to the conclusion that indent etal comes, via French, from the Latin word *dens*, meaning "tooth." The Latin word *indentare* means "to make a series of tooth-like notches."

At one time, documents were served in such a way that contractual parties could prove their legal participation in an agreement by matching the corresponding indentations of the two copies. Such a procedure was called "binding by indenture;" a device used to legally bind indentured servants to their patrons.

Today, a dent is generally defined as "a depression in a surface made by pressure or a blow;" it can also convey the sense of "meaningful progress." Dint is derived from dent, the middle English version of the Latin word *dens*, and means "force or effort."

We hope that by dint of our efforts this word origin has made a dent on your etymological storehouse.

Epitaph for a King Who Never Knew Battle

By Louis H. Clark

When I'm getting on a plane, I always buy an apple and a book to read. If I'm not home by 6, the kids have their dinners. When I come home, my wife and I have dinner together. We exchange gossip, and it's one of the nicest parts of coming home.

The book is to spare me from having to read about all the business executives who appear in those magazines on the rack when you travel business class.

This time, I just made the plane, grabbing an apple from an open stand and paying a buck for it because I would just make the plane.

When I got into my seat, I noticed a paperback stuck in my seat. The paperback was called "Epitaph for Kings" by someone called de Grammont. It was an old paperback. There was no front cover. I opened it up to read and was immediately fascinated by the number of sycophants there were at the Court of Louis XIV, who was called for some reason "The Sun King."

People would just about kill themselves for a compliment from him. For instance, one of the dukes at court was head of the landscaping department at Fontainebleau.

Not that he ever did any work, God forbid, but if the King, riding about his gardens, said "I would like a bunch of yellow over there," the duke would immediately gather a hundred workmen.

They would then gather up thousands of yellow flowers and plant them where the King wanted them, so that the next day he could ride past and say, "I was right about the flowers." The Duke then bowed and said "Your Majesty is correct about everything."

His own son did the same thing. One day he said "Your Majesty, I will never learn anything." The King asked him why. "Every time your Majesty wins a battle, my tutor gives me the day off. There have been so many of them."

What a compliment that was for a King who had never been at a battlefield and so could say when he was dying, "I loved war too much."

Letters to the Editor

Council Should Give Diner Site Owner a Chance to Develop Lot

Why is the Town Council proposing to spend \$100,000 (and possibly more) to purchase the site of the former Excellent Diner and turn it into a "pocket park?" Yes, the spot has been an eyesore ever since the diner was unceremoniously shipped off to Germany, but surely there are better uses for the site and for the taxpayers' money!

As far as I can tell, this proposal came about because of the Union County program granting funds to towns wishing to create pocket parks, and someone on the council wants to make sure that Westfield gets its share, i.e., \$100,000.

That's fine, except that the town will have to put up at least that much of our own money just to buy the site, and thousands more to create and maintain

the park!
 And who will use this park? I, for one, find it hard to imagine relaxing in a sliver of space between a building and a parking lot while inhaling fumes from the cars on North Avenue. When will the council wake up and realize that this is a bad idea?!

If they're so eager to spend money on some green space, there are plenty of ways to enhance our existing parks (more play equipment, more plantings, etc.).

The property owner would like to develop the site for commercial use, which seems much more appropriate for this location. Let's give him the chance to do so before we throw our money away!

Deirdre Gellinne
 Westfield

'Centre Boulevard' Will Only Confuse Visitors to Scotch Plains Downtown

I object to the Downtown Task Force's recommendation that the name "Centre Boulevard" be superimposed over the existing street names of East Second Street, Plainfield Avenue and Westfield Avenue.

No prior notice of this recommendation was given to the residents of these three streets. However, when the recommendation was discovered, residents voiced their objection before the Township Council, and now a dialogue has been created.

In a recent letter to property and business owners, the Downtown Task Force presents its case for using "Centre Boulevard." The creative efforts of the Downtown Task Force to enhance the Scotch Plains business district should be applauded. However, the recommendation regarding the overlay of "Centre Boulevard" on top of our established street names should be rejected.

The Task Force claims that yet another name for the three streets in question will lessen confusion. To the contrary, it will add to any confusion which may exist.

As justification for the designation "Centre Boulevard," the Task Force refers to the dual names of Avenue of the Americas and Sixth Avenue in New York City, without any evidence that the two names are not confusing.

Adding another name to the existing street names will not create additional business or more clearly identify the business center. It is sufficient to refer to the center of Scotch Plains as "Town

Centre" and leave it at that.

The Task Force also states in its notice that their recommendation is not a prelude to an expansion of the business zone. This appears to be in the nature of a typical political promise never kept, since a business district cannot survive without expansion.

The Township Council may consider this issue at one of its meetings in June. I urge the residents of the three streets concerned to attend the meeting and voice their opposition.

Thomas J. Denitzo
 Scotch Plains

Cellular Phone Service for Westfield Crossing Guards Too Costly

I must admit I was surprised to read that Gail Vernick was responsible for providing cellphones for crossing guards. After questioning several guards I realized that I wasn't sure which "selected few" had the phones. Then I received word that Ms. Vernick was requesting that people donate their old phone. This was her way to improve the "quality of life" in Westfield.

I would like to point out that a new phone is cheap. Some special offers will give you the phone for free if you sign up for their service. Service is provided for about \$20-30 a month. Multiply that by the number of crossing guards (let's say 20) x 12 months. Wow! That is almost \$5,000 per year!

Local Resident Thanks Communities for Support Towards Senior Awards

I have just come from a wonderful event at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. The Senior Awards were held this past Thursday evening (May 21) and many of the students received generous scholarships from many community groups.

While I do take pride in our graduating seniors, it is the communities of Scotch Plains and Fanwood that I would like to commend. There is an African proverb that states, "It takes a village to raise a child." Tonight I saw that village.

The 57 community representatives who came and shared the fruits of their labors with our children were awe-inspiring. All parts of Scotch Plains and Fanwood were represented. Many of these groups have spent all year raising money to give away to worthy students who will become better citizens because of the generosity of so many.

If Issues Cannot Be Addressed At-Large, Why Redistrict Board?

Having moved to Union County within the past year, both my wife and I were anxious to get acquainted with both local issues and candidates.

We were aware that a political shift had occurred at the county level, and that serious issues (particularly the Union County Utilities Authority incinerator (UCUA) in Rahway) needed to be explained and addressed.

In the course of the campaign I had the opportunity to meet with two of the three Republican candidates for Freeholder and came away singularly unimpressed.

I realize that public service can be a burden for those in the private sector, but that said, it seemed that for one candi-

date campaigning was a tedious chore whose necessity should have been alleviated by incumbency.

As for the other, he could offer no reason as to why there was a shift from a Republican Freeholder majority in the early 1990s, no alternative approach for dealing with the incinerator problem (despite offering the benefit of the doubt on the rationale behind its having been built in the first place while the board was in Republican hands), and no reason for voting Republican beyond serving as a minority check on Democratic spending.

Taxation has been flat under the Democrats and an attempt has been made to deal with the incinerator financing. These are county-wide issues that transcend eastern-versus-western Union County and party line.

If the Republican Party cannot speak to them, there is no point in Assemblyman Alan M. Augustine, Richard H. Bagger and Union County Republican Committee Chairman Frank X. McDermott attempting to guarantee a Republican presence on the Board of Freeholders by restructuring and redistricting.

If issues cannot be framed and addressed on an at-large basis in an area as small (though diverse) as Union County, the question is not whether the voice of the electorate would be better heard with sectoral representation on the board, but rather whether the entire framework for county government is relevant on the face.

Mary Ball Cappio
 Scotch Plains

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Michael C. Wolski
 Westfield

Michael Lewis
 Fanwood

WESTFIELD GIRLS SCOUTS Westfield Girl Scouts Conclude Year With Several Milestone Activities

Written by Girl Scouts for Girl Scouts

As the 1997-1998 this Girl Scouting year draws to a close, there are several important dates to keep in mind. The major upcoming events are: the Gold and Silver Award ceremony, the final Service Team meeting of the year and the Washington School Girl Scout Fly Up.

The Westfield Gold and Silver Award ceremony will take place on Wednesday, June 10, at 7:30 p.m. in the Chapel of The Presbyterian Church in Westfield, 140 Mountain Avenue. The Gold Award, the highest award in Girl Scouting, will be conferred on Lauren Elizabeth Flynn and Elise Karyn Tate.

Fourteen Cadette Girl Scouts will receive the Silver Award, the second highest award in Girl Scouting. These are: Sarah Getman Burke, Shannon Elizabeth Kunath, Elizabeth Ann Madresh, Molly Rose Orbach, Sarah Elizabeth Round, Lauren Elyse Solon, all of Troop 36, and Rachel Bavolar, Maureen Lynch Cooke, Suanne Elizabeth Hutchinson, Nicole Leigh Infantino, Rosanne Marie Palatucci, Laura Francis Pregenzer, Bree Danielle Sherry, Joanna Grace Todaro, all of Troop 491.

The Westfield Girl Scout Service Team will hold a brunch, their final meeting of the scouting year, on Monday, June 8, from 9:15 to 11:30 a.m. at the home of Merry Wisler, 726 Tuxford Turn.

All troops accepting the early registration option are reminded that registration materials should be returned by Monday,

June 15, to Marget Partridge, 816 Sherbrooke Drive.

On June 15 at 7 p.m., Washington School will hold its Girl Scout Fly-Up ceremony based on the theme "Celebrating 90 Years in Girl Scouting." Refreshments will follow the ceremony.

Leaving us this year are six extraordinary Senior Girl Scouts who have dedicated their time towards making Girl Scouting and its values a priority in their lives.

The graduating seniors are: Christina Ho, Alice Kelman, Corinne Liebrich, Michelle Meyn, Marielena Roig, and Heather Simpson. We wish these girls much success and happiness in college and beyond.

We invite all girls and adults interested in Girl Scouting to become part of our organization. For further information contact the Washington Rock Girl Scout Council at 201 East Grove Street, or by call Liz Fallon at (908) 233-3484.

We wish all Girl Scouts and Leaders a wonderful summer and one filled with creative planning for the next scouting year. We look forward to seeing you in September!

This column may be viewed at the Westfield Leader Web site at www.goleader.com/girlscouts.

This column is prepared monthly, September through May, by Westfield Girl Scouts for the scouting community and the public.

SPFHs 'Festival of Music' Draws Kudos for Talent and Presentation

I had the privilege and honor of attending the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School "Festival of Music" on Thursday, May 14. What a great pleasure it was.

The talent was just unbelievable. No one could imagine the effort and practice that had to be made to produce such a show.

It started off with a solo group, then the percussion special feature, next the Barbershop Quartet, the xylophone group with new variety sound, then the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Sensations, then to the The Moonglowers. No, we are not forgetting the concert choir.

Can you imagine 300 students being together on the stage at the same time? Our choir leader, handled the large group, who were all so well trained and handled so professionally by Laurie Wellman.

The changing of the pianists — one great accompanist to another — also amazed me, plus the fact that they also played other instruments in the band.

As usual, our real "pro," Vincent Turturiello, handled the various bands and especially the Moonglowers, which have been in existence for around 50 years.

I also want to thank all the assistants who helped to put such a delightful concert together. There was also a delightful comedy routine, put on by a male group, using a push broom, and who did a great rhythm in banging to the beat.

Congratulations to all those involved, and God bless them all for a beautiful job well done.

James F. Denny
 Fanwood