

Editorial3

Welcome Legal Immigrants As New Citizens

Last week, state Senator John Sabini welcomed 50 senior citizens into new lives as full-fledged Americans. The 50 are a diverse group that came to the United States from countries all over the world.

Many in the group came to this country some years ago. They became citizens now, after reaching retirement age, because when they first arrived—legally—they immediately entered into the serious business of making a living for themselves and their families. Some worked two, perhaps even three jobs to be able to pay rent, put food on the table and clothes on their and their children's backs. They sent those children to school—an opportunity many would never have had in the "old country"—and encouraged them to become productive, loyal American citizens. Finally, at the end of

their working lives when they at last had some time to devote to their own needs and wishes, they realized a dream they had put on hold for many years and became American citizens.

It is worthy of note that the 50 new citizens whom Sabini welcomed at the Elmhurst-Jackson Heights Senior Center, did all the things that loyal Americans do, although until they took their Oath of Citizenship, could not vote or engage in some other activities. Now that they have earned the privilege of citizenship, we are sure they will accept its responsibilities as well. It is, we think, safe to assume that many, if not all, of the new citizens have registered to vote.

It is also worthy of note that the 50 entered into their new lives in America by entering this country legally. Though they were not yet citizens and would not be for

many years, they demonstrated their allegiance to their new homeland by obeying its laws. Many sent some of the money they made in America back to the loved ones they had left behind, sometimes to help bring other family members here to start new lives as legal immigrants and prospective citizens. Such is the history of the great majority of American citizens, going back, in some cases, for many generations. Those who come here in accordance with the law of the land, live honest and upright lives and seek to join this family with many members of divergent histories and background united in the common bond of citizenship in the United States of America have always been welcome.

We salute the 50 newest members of the American family.

Sports Teach Lessons On And Off Field

Across the land baseball pennant races are heating up and football teams are taking to the gridiron for the start of a new season that will end with two teams competing in the Super Bowl early next year. High school and college competition is gaining momentum as well. Across the land, sports of every variety are making their presence felt.

In some cases and for some reasons, sports have gotten a bad reputation. Competition at the professional level is tainted by claims of performance-enhancing substances, illegally obtained signals and unsportsmanlike conduct. In too many school districts, tight budgets mean sports programs are among the first ostensible "frills" to be cut. This is regrettable for a number of reasons.

From pre-kindergarten on, sports teach lessons that have nothing to do with physical prowess. Kindergarten children playing "tag" are learning to take turns and solve problems. Starting in the primary grades and going on through college, team sports teach loyalty and the value of working together to achieve a common goal.

Even losing can have its benefits: the satisfaction of having done one's best and the determination to practice and train to do better next time are two that come to mind. While it seems unlikely that it was British admiral, Lord Horatio Nelson, who actually said that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, the point of the aphorism is a valid one: the lessons learned in schoolyard sports hold true for an entire lifetime.

The ancient Romans coined the saying "mens sano in corpore sano", translated as "a sound mind in a sound body", because they knew it was true. A person need not be a world-class athlete to benefit from even moderate exercise. We can think of no one in the vast army of self-improvement advocates regularly making their presence felt in the mass media who does not advocate at least some sort of physical activity. People who have suffered some form of physical disability undergo rehabilitation exercises that keep their bodies active and find that their minds and general outlook benefit as well.

As with just about everything we know

of, sports can have drawbacks as well as advantages. Stories abound of birth certificates altered to gain an unfair advantage in Little League baseball competition and parents who come to blows after hockey matches because a call did not go their (or their child's) way. News reports of boorish fans sometimes incited to murderous rage during, after or because of a game bring headlines. These instances, however, are the exception, rather than the rule.

It is, we feel, unfair and unreasonable to blame sports as a whole for parents who for whatever reason feel they must live their ambitions through their children or for fans who forget that the word "fan" itself is a truncated form of "fanaticism" (which consists of redoubling one's efforts after having forgotten one's aims) and get so carried away that they do harm to others or thoroughly embarrass themselves. The good that comes from engaging in a sport—any sport—far outweighs any disadvantages. We hope that sports will continue to be a valued part of all elements of our lives for a very long time to come.

LIRR, Spare Our Trees

To The Editor:

The Long Island Rail Road is clear cutting the trees along their right of way because the leaves that fall on the tracks apparently cause a problem for their new trains in terms of slippage. The railroad will also be installing security fencing in certain locations. On the Port Washington branch, it is my understanding that the tree removal will go from Flushing out to Port Washington. Already, trees have been destroyed in Broadway, Flushing and Little Neck.

To me, cutting the trees down to prevent leaves from falling on the tracks is like detonating an atomic bomb to kill a

few flies. Totally overkill! And who is to say that the wind will not blow leaves from other nearby trees onto the tracks? Will the railroad try to destroy these trees as well? And in order to install security fencing, would not pruning existing trees be adequate? Why the need to destroy so many trees? The railroad should be considering other viable alternatives to address their issues.

Trees are extremely important to our health and well being in our polluted environment. Trees filter our air and provide cooling shade in the summer. They provide food and shelter for birds and small animals and they are aesthetically pleasing to most people. By the railroad tracks, they

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