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# THE REGION & STATE

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B SECTION

## Many unknown oil and gas wells

By JOYNA A. FIO  
*Staff Writer*

It was 140 years ago this month that Oil Edwin L. Drake, an employee of the Pennsylvania Rock Oil Company, began the arduous task of drilling an oil well on leased land in western Oil Creek.

On Aug. 28, 1859, he was successful, striking a vein of oil at the depth of 69 1/2 feet and establishing the first oil well in the world. Since then, state officials estimate—and admittedly they are only guesses—that 221,000 gas and oil wells have been dug in Pennsylvania.

These wells are part of Pennsylvania's rich tradition of gas and oil exploration, and the state's contribution to these industries and the booms they inspired can't be overstated.

Still, the legacy of all that money made from the state's natural resources is a problem to estimate that Pennsylvania can't begin to afford the cost of correcting it.

When the booms faded or when wells stopped being productive, thousands of wells were simply abandoned, rather than being properly sealed.

The state has managed to keep records on an estimated 184,000 oil and gas wells. This means that somewhere out there—in fields, along streams and even under towns—an estimated 134,000 abandoned sites, called orphan wells, might be leaking contaminants into the environment or waiting to explode in some cases, in response to the original operator, so the state is left to plug them.

The problem: orphan wells create an environmental protection has been able to identify only 7,500 of the orphan wells, leaving more than 173,000 unaccounted for. Second, it would cost between \$40 million and \$100 million to cap the few orphan wells that have been discovered, according to DEP estimates—money that simply isn't in the state's budget.

In a report released last week to Governor and the state Legislature, James E. Don, director of the Bureau of Oil and Gas Management, recommended that the state find a way to finance the plugging through either the General Fund or a bond issue.

"If you look at the numbers of orphan wells, they just aren't enough of a funding source," Erb said in an interview shortly after the report was released. "It's like the sewer's a major program."

For now, he is limited to plugging the wells as money becomes available.

And while the process has moved along at a fairly steady pace, it wasn't quick enough for two young boys.

On Jan. 8, Beaver County teens Brian Datz, 17, and Francis McConeeny, 16, died after intentionally inhaling methane fumes leaking from one of the wells in Haysport, Pa. The practice is known as huffing.

Adding to the tragedy of the boys' deaths was that the well in question was among 28 orphan wells that the DEP had on a list to be plugged but the contract to do this spring.

The DEP evaluated abandoned wells at a \$400,000 cost, with 100 indicating the most dangerous.

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### BIAN O'NEILL

## Old friends can lose their luster

Imagine this: Twenty-five years ago you had a good friend, one you were and would be that other people loved, absolutely loved, seeing the two of you together. You went your separate ways.

Now all these thirty years in New York and Hollywood were many a year for just as the two of you will get together again. Once a week. And you're not in the mood.

I'll tell you what I thought when I read that, next fall, ABC will re-air Mary McCormack and Linda Morganstern, those 1970s comic duo "The Mary Tyler Moore Show."

"I don't get me wrong. I loved the show. I grew up watching reruns of "The Dick Van Dyke Show," starring More as Laura Petrie. As I've mentioned before, when she danced around her suburban living room in those corset pants, I felt urges I didn't yet understand, even as I made silent thanks that my Mom never felt compelled to do it.

So when Moore became Mary McCormack, what was in my eyes. I noted for her from the get-go. I loved her energetic gait, her grin from the start, too. Linda, Ted Danson's Mervyn Slaughter and, especially, Lou Grant. One of the first columns ever banged out in Pittsburgh was the "Let Greg."

After came to the Rainbow Kitchen in Homestead, and I asked him how Mr. Grant would react to the cover.

The story wasn't Aster. I was told that great, aged white hair that clumped molasses. The story was in the volunteers. What motivated them?

He asked the volunteers who were helping the hungry, and Mr. Grant might have said the same thing about the volunteers hungry for nostalgia, the ones ABC feeds in uniform. Brenda and Mary. What's our motivation? And aren't two in a lidless.

Think about it. Think about your closest friends from the mid-1970s. Or if you know those readers who go back to the streets.

Some of us, if we're lucky, are still tight with friends from the coffee past, but in this mobile society, the odds of that are increasingly slim. That's one reason "Nuts at the Movies" are so popular. Two-dimensional oddballs are the only ones we can get to see and catch.

The concept we met outside the city limits, too, when where were we could find high school or college or old jobs or neighborhoods somehow evolve into just another address on the Christmas card list. If that, And, on the rare day we run into them, we know five minutes into the conversation that we've already lived our best lives.

Take my little sister, for instance. She moved to Philadelphia to start a new life, and she still has this photo of her first look of her first day in a new town. It was a Center City intersection, just as I did at the opening of every show.

Could she, now the mother of five in the divorce courts, to ask about the girl who snuggled her parents? Did she ever see her? I love her like two years ago for her. "It was fine, but your 3-year-old daughter would be kind of like me, but you know we had kids with four kids living around, I'd go to see her again, but she lives out in Long Island."

This very ABC knows we'll turn into "Mary and Linda" half Nelson. "Nuts at the Movies" is a cause I want to see done as it was back in the day, but it will remain forever of better terms, and it could be worse.

ABC is also contemplating an update of "Fantasy Island."

Yes, I'd never meet my friends on Devil's Island. Providing it has cable.

## Many Yellow Cab drivers give customers their cell-phone numbers. One has even set up a dispatch service, which will be the subject of a hearing.



Cab drivers wait for fares behind the Westin William Penn on William Penn Way, Downtown.

## PUC protests driver's own dispatch system

By Lawrence Walsh  
*Staff Writer*

"This S-11, 'Honey, where are you?' "Honey, where are you?"

"It's for the million." And with that, Yellow Cab driver Dan Schreengost, better known as S-11, began a rant that provoked a protest by his customers. The 30-year-old driver, who has been driving for traffic, made a left turn from his curb position to the entrance of the Pittsburgh Hilton and Towers and headed for the South Side.

The customer, Leah, called the cellular telephone number that appears on Schreengost's business cards, and their conversation bypassed Yellow Cab's dispatch service.

Schreengost is not the only taxi driver who asks regular customers to call him on their own cell phones.

"It's a convenience for my customers and a safety feature for me," said Schreengost. "It's a way to get a call off and on for 15 years."

"I've never been robbed, but I have had some fares run me," he said. "I wouldn't have to worry at all if I knew all my customers."

His customers, who enjoy his jovial demeanor, promptness and clean cab, have little trouble finding Schreengost's business card in their purses or wallets.

The yellow and green cabs with a gold logo identifies him as "Dan S-11," a "professional driver," and lists his phone number.

"I call myself 'S-11' because that's how many letters follow S in my last name," he said.

About half of Yellow Cab's drivers now use cellular telephones and business cards.

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Volks, who complained of pain in his left shoulder, was released from Allegheny General Hospital on Saturday. He could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Two of the three other drivers remained hospitalized.

Frank Schiavone, a PAT employee since April 1991, remained at Allegheny General Hospital but was moved out of intensive care.

His condition remained serious, said Karen Dwyer, a hospital spokeswoman. Schiavone, who was diagnosed with a head injury, a broken collarbone and a broken toe.

Julian Hopson, 35, of Williamsport, Pa., was released from the hospital yesterday. According to hospital spokesman, Hopson had an air bag injury to his 1993 Chrysler New Yorker.

Sean Corrigan, 38, of Bala, Pa., was discharged yesterday from Allegheny General Hospital. The accident had trapped him in the 1994 Chevrolet Lumina.

In an initial interview after the accident, Schiavone said he had not lost any memory as he came down Green Tree Hill toward the tunnel. It was a later survey by Allegheny General Hospital, Schiavone said he had not been headed up as he approached the tunnel.

"The loss of memory was not a factor here," Schiavone said yesterday. While questioning, Volk, the trooper said, he saw his signs that

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## Pals send tape an 'at to priest in Rome

By TORSTEN OVE  
*Staff Writer*

So this priest is over to Rome working for his Franciscan order as a priest, but he never Pittsburghed to his pals' his hair, and as his body decides to send him a tape of them "Burgunder Thunder" ads, you know them ones with Paul Leng protesting her God and people's father figure as "at."

Pittsburgh made quite an impression on Father Kevin Quaidy, S.M., N.Y. he worked as a chaplain at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center from 1982 to 1990 before being reassigned to Rome.

He has been in Rome ever since—particularly for the entire Brothers Pennsylvania student community copied in radio ads for Burgunder Thunder in Pittsburgh.

He'll soon get a chance to hear them again.

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## Escaped slaves' tales remain inspirational

They still teach, speaker contends

By MONICA L. HAYNES  
*Staff Writer*

Consider the life of Robert Jackson, a slave from Virginia. Beaten and bloodied after an escape attempt, he persevered and ended up in a week to live in the state of Tennessee.

After getting another black man to smuggle him some rope and tools, Jackson tipped up a pole-like device and lowered himself from a window in a place of capture to the ground.

"I was to work 100 days in a field, and I had a narrative of a mile where I got away from a field."

Kiddon Prentiss, who happened to have brought a cat from Burgunder Dodge a few years back, thought about sending the radio ads to a girl when the talk her car for a burgunder last Friday. She told Al Burgunder

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How a Dream Speech" in which King told how much he wanted his children to be "judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

SEE PHILADELPHIA LAWYER AND UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE MICHAEL BENJAMIN SAYS THE PRIMARY ALLEGORIC IN AN EXAMPLE THAT HAS INSPIRED TO DAY FOR anyone trying to overcome the obstacles of prejudice.

In a speech at the PHIL Law School last week—"The Content of Character: A Cultural Historical Perspective"—Benjamin said: "The traditional intellectual understanding is to enlarge our understanding of the human experience. It's to give us insight on the possibilities of our own lives."

A native of Rome, he earned his undergraduate degree from Lincoln University in 1968.

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