

Pen Pals Meet 19 Years Later

Editor's Note: Gail Skipper Fowler had dreamed for years of meeting her Nebraskan pen pal in August the opportunity came—a 30th birthday present from her husband, Steve. Now Gail's making plans to entertain Cindy Lebruska and family when they visit here. "I wouldn't take anything in the world for it," she said of the trip. "The minute I got there it was seeing an old friend. I just fitted right in with her family." The following article on the pen pals' meeting appeared in the Aug. 11 edition of the Scottsbluff, Neb., Star-Herald.

BY ANNETTE HEUSSMANN
Of The Star Herald

For 19 years, Cindy Lebruska and Gail Fowler have shared letters, photos and phone calls, but only Wednesday were the two able to reach out and touch each other.

As 12-year-olds, they subscribed to Teen magazine, as did many girls their age. They both responded to ads for pen pals in the magazine.

Teen screened the applicants and matched them with other young girls across America. When pairing was complete, letters started to cross the country between Mitchell, Neb., and Shallotte, N.C.

For 19 years they thought about meeting each other. Mrs. Lebruska said she hoped that one day they would be able to meet halfway between their homes on buses. On Memorial Day Mrs. Fowler's husband suggested that she fly to Scottsbluff and visit her pen pal.

"I originally planned to fly right into Scottsbluff, but it would have meant a four-hour layover in Denver and changing airlines," Mrs. Fowler said.

After seeing Stapleton International Airport, she said she was glad she didn't have to change flights. "I'd have sat down and waited for someone to help me, I would have been so lost." As it turned out she flew into Denver and was met by Mrs. Lebruska, who had decided to drive to Denver for the meeting to show Mrs. Fowler some of the sights in the Rocky Mountain States.

Mrs. Fowler experienced many firsts in her trip west. She had never flown before, had never seen the western part of the country and was quite unaccustomed to the Nebraska landscape.

"More than anything, I like the scenery here. I take pictures whenever I can get Cindy to stop the car," said Mrs. Fowler with a grin.

"You never realize how much you take for granted when you live somewhere. I don't even think about some of our sights that are really interesting to people who don't have them around all the time," commented Mrs. Lebruska.

For most, if not all Nebraskans, windmills are just part of life. But when Mrs. Fowler asked what one was, Mrs. Lebruska said, "It's a cow fan in the pasture." Laughingly, she commented, "I sure am glad she has a sense of humor or that wouldn't have been appreciated."

The petite woman with a heartwarming southern accent had never seen an oil well either. Mrs. Lebruska said she never even thought to mention what one was as they drove through Colorado where the black giants are commonplace.

The two were concerned about recognizing each other at the airport.

"Pictures never really look like you," commented Mrs. Lebruska. She decided to surprise her friend with balloons. "I looked silly with three great big balloons, but we found each other."

Friday was Mrs. Fowler's birthday, so her hostess planned a birthday cake to honor her new-old friend.

Over the years they have exchanged numerous gifts through the mail with amazing compatibility. "We seem to have the same tastes and have shared gifts that fit right into our homes," said Mrs. Lebruska.

Their meeting was another opportunity for sharing. Among the gifts Mrs. Fowler brought were a "Taffy



A DREAM CAME TRUE for Gail Fowler of Shallotte in August when she flew from the coast to Nebraska to meet longtime pen-pal Cindy Lebruska, bringing her a

homemade "Taffy Patch Kid" made from—appropriately—salt water taffy.

Patch Kid," sea shells, sand dollars and a jewel box with an open sand dollar mounted on it.

Mrs. Lebruska said her husband found an agate and some petrified wood for souvenirs for Mrs. Fowler. Recounting the momentos they collected on trips to various sites in Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota and Nebraska

and at souvenir shops, Mrs. Lebruska joked, "She's going to have to buy a suitcase to get everything home."

With the thought of their week together ending, tears came quickly to Mrs. Lebruska's eyes. Wiping them away, she said, "It's like we've always known each other. I'm going to be really lonely when she leaves."

Sexual Abuse Reports On Rise; Food Stamps Checked In Mail

BY SUSAN USHER

Reports of sexual abuse of children are up in the county and a new mailing procedure is helping social workers spot food stamp fraud.

Members of the Brunswick County Board of Social Services digested this information and more during a two-hour meeting Monday.

Nearly an hour of the meeting was spent behind closed doors to discuss "personal matters," with no action reported or taken afterwards in public session. Vice Chairman Edna Crouch was absent.

Social Worker Supervisor Evelyn

Johnson reported a busy September and October in the protective services unit. In September, the unit received 35 new child abuse reports, two adult abuse reports and additional information on three other cases. Oct. 1 through Oct. 25, 27 child abuse reports and three adult abuse reports were received.

"We're noting a definite increase in the number of child sexual abuse cases we're getting," she noted.

Three children were placed in foster care under voluntary placement agreements when their parents said they couldn't care for them ade-

quately even with agency counseling and support.

If the home situation doesn't improve in up to six months, the county will file a petition for termination of parental rights, seeking to retain agency custody of the children.

In a related move, protective service workers will be rotated into new working areas every six months effective Nov. 1.

Mailing Check

A new mailing procedure is an attempt to avoid repetition of a situation that occurred July 5th, when \$21,000 in food stamps were "lost" in the mail. But some began reappearing several days after replacements for about \$15,000 had been issued. Post office employees couldn't recall if families getting the replacements also received the other issuance, making it hard to track down and obtain returns from those who received double issuances.

"There's not a month passes that we don't get a report of someone not getting their food stamps," said unit supervisor Sandy Jackson.

Under the new procedure each post

office is sent a list of allotments and clients as well as the food stamps in a locked, specially marked orange bag. The post office staff is to check off each issuance as it is delivered to a postal customer. That way if someone reports not receiving their issuance, the agency can check to see if it was delivered. If there is evidence an issuance was mailed and delivered, the agency has been denying replacement requests, said Ms. Jackson. "I believe it will result in state-level hearings. I don't think we can win many."

Other Business

In other business, the board:

- Approved taking one fraud case to court after efforts to work out voluntary repayment failed; and recommended attempting voluntary repayment first as usual in a case that may involve as much as \$10,000 in overpayments to a client in several programs.

- Learned that in a 10-day period, 743 applications were received for participation in the Low Income Energy Assistance Program. Applications will be accepted through

Nov. 27. "It's not first-come, first-served, so those who apply the last day are eligible for the same service as someone who applied the first day."

- Heard from Orrock that on Tuesday he would present the AFDC-Medicaid unit and supervisor Lillie Barnes a certificate awarded the department for having no errors in cases checked during the last Aid To Families With Dependent Children quality control period. "There weren't too many of these handed out," he said.

- Presented finance officer and former clerk to the board Linda Green a plaque of appreciation for her "years of unselfish service."

- Orrock announced that the regional personnel office would cooperate with a county position reclassification study this year since a number of departmental employees are competitive service exam employees.

- Learned \$3,000 had been transferred from departmental supplies to insurance and bonds to cover increased

premiums for food stamp coverage. While the premium doubled, said Orrock, the coverage was reduced, a problem agencies all over are also facing. To decrease the costs as much as possible, the agency is trying to keep its inventory of food stamps as low as possible, but in September, for instance, \$200,783 in stamps was issued.

- Agreed, after Orrock discussed apparent shortfalls in several line items such as foster care, AFDC and special assistance programs with County Finance Director Wallace Harding, to delay seeking additional funds from the county until farther along in the budget year. It's easier to project total needs for three or so months than for nine months, Orrock pointed out. Presently, spending in several areas is way over budget.

- Heard Chairman Frankie Rabon, a county commissioner, praise departmental employees for their work during the recent threat of hurricane. In turn, Orrock praised commissioners for the example they set other employees by their presence throughout the emergency.

Baskets To Help Needy

Families can begin signing up for Christmas baskets 10 a.m. Friday, Nov. 1, at the Home Missions Center in Bolivia, said Ouida Hewett, volunteer coordinator for the Brunswick County Information and Referral Center.

Last year, she said, Christmas baskets were given to over 250 needy families in Brunswick County.

In 1984 school children donated over 10,000 cans of food last year along with toys and other gifts. Churches, organizations and individuals gave money to purchase meats and other necessities.

Hewett said, "We will be taking donations for the baskets during November and December. Clothes, shoes or any small gift items will be appreciated."

Band Patrons Invited To Meet

The West Brunswick High School Band Boosters will meet Thursday, Nov. 7, at 7:30 p.m. in the high school band room.

Local residents are encouraged to come and support the school band program, said Frankie Woods, spokesman.

The group will be working on a number of projects, including fundraising events to raise money for better band instruments, uniforms for the band and equipment and uniforms for a flag corps.

"We need more adult support for our children," she said.

County Unemployment Down

Brunswick County's jobless rate fell to 6.5 percent during September, according to the N.C. Employment Security Commission.

Of the county's labor force of 19,950 individuals, 1,290 were out of work in September.

This was an improvement over August, when the unemployment rate was 8.6 percent in the county.

The statewide unemployment rate fell in September from 5.8 percent to 4.2 percent.

Lynda Burgiss, Employment Security Commission public information officer, said the statewide decrease can be attributed to the continuing stabilization of the traditional industries of textile, apparel and furniture.

Point VFD Starts Turkey Shoot

Shallotte Point Volunteer Fire Department begins its annual fall turkey shoots Saturday at 6 p.m. following an all-you-can-eat fish dinner.

Fried fish plates will be sold from 11 a.m. to about 5 p.m. and will feature fried fish, fried sweet

potatoes, coleslaw and hushpuppies. Cost is \$3.50 per plate.

Five or more plates will be delivered; call 754-6806 to order.

A bake sale is also planned. Turkeys and ham will be the prizes at the turkey shoot. The cost is \$2 per shot.

Students Honored By Society

Four West Brunswick High School students and one alumnus have been selected as 1985 members in the Society of Distinguished American High School Students.

Sheila Huddle, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Huddle, is a 1985 West Brunswick graduate.

Lesley Gore, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Ray Gore, and Dorothy Gore, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Shelton Gore, are seniors at West Brunswick this year.

Amy Hewett, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mack Leon Hewett, is a junior, and Jonathan Gore, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bobby L. Gore, is a sophomore.

Students are accepted into the society on the basis of academic achievement and extracurricular and civic activities.

Isaiah Mejia, minister of music and youth at Jennies Branch Baptist Church, sponsored the students for membership.

IMPRINTED
MOUSE TRAPS

RADIO • TV • DIRECT MAIL

JAN.	
FEB.	
MARCH	
APR.	
MAY	
JUNE	
JULY	

So you tried a few different ways to spend your advertising money and now your sales curve has dropped completely off the chart.

ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME YOU STARTED USING THE EFFECTIVE ONE...

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON